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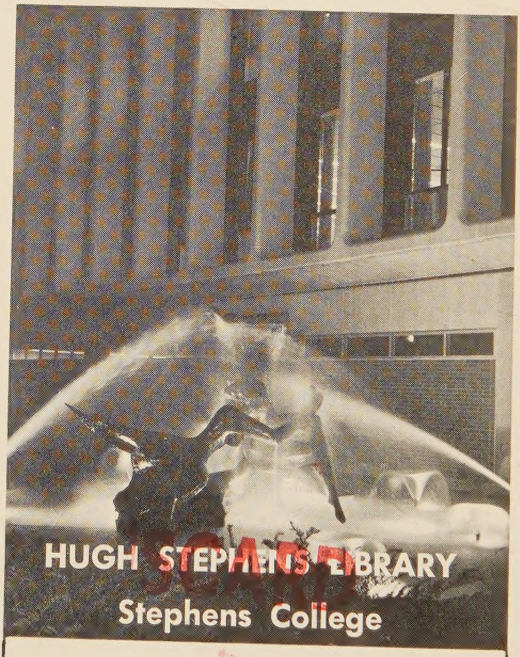

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THE UNTILLED FIELD & THE LAKE

Volume VIII

THE CARRA EDITION

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

GEORGE MOORE

THE UNTILLED FIELD & THE LAKE

BY

GEORGE MOORE

Carra Edition

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THE UNTILLED FIELD

(Carra Edition)

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THE LAKE

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This edition consists of 1000 numbered sets of twenty-one volumes each. The first volume is numbered, and signed by the author.

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CONTENTS

THE UNTILLED FIELD

PAGE

PREFACE ix
THE EXILE 1
HOME SICKNESS 28
SOME PARISHIONERS 42
PATCHWORK 57
THE WEDDING FEAST 72
THE WINDOW 85
A LETTER TO ROME 109
A PLAY-HOUSE IN THE WASTE 125
JULIA CAHILL'S CURSE 137
THE WEDDING GOWN 144
THE CLERK'S QUEST 155
ALMSGIVING 161
SO ON HE FARES 167
THE WILD GOOSE 181

THE LAKE 267

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PREFACE

IT must have been somewhere at the end of the nineties, not unlikely in ninety-nine, that dear Edward said to me in the Temple: "I should like to write my plays in Irish." And it was not long afterwards, in the beginning of 1900, that Yeats persuaded him to come to Ireland to found a literary theatre. In search of a third person, they called on me in Victoria Street, and it is related in *Ave* how we packed our bags and went away to do something. We all did something, but none did what he set out to do. Yeats founded a realistic theatre, Edward emptied two churches—he and Palestrina between them—and I wrote *The Untilled Field,* a book written in the beginning out of no desire of self-expression, but in the hope of furnishing the young Irish of the future with models. Yeats said that I had learned the art of presentation in Paris, and in 1900 we believed that the Irish language could be revived. "You see, it is necessary," I observed to Edward, "that Ireland's future writers should have models, and the stories will be published in a Jesuit magazine." "If the Jesuits assume all responsibility," he muttered, and fell to pondering over his pipe, but he raised no further objection and invested with full authority I wrote *The Wedding Gown, Alms-Giving, The Clerk's Quest,* and *So On He Fares,* in English rather than in Anglo-Irish, for of what help would that pretty idiom, in which we catch the last accents of the original language, be to Tiagh Donoghue, my translator? As soon as his translations were finished, my manuscripts were to be burnt; but these first stories begot a desire to paint the portrait of my country, and this could only be done in a Catholic

atmosphere, and as I had just come out of *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa, The Exile* rose up in my mind quickly, and before putting the finishing hand to it I began *Home Sickness.* The village of Duncannon in the story set me thinking of the villages round Dublin, and I wrote *Some Parishioners, Patchwork, The Wedding Feast,* and *The Window.* The somewhat harsh rule of Father Maguire set me thinking of a gentler type of priest, and the pathetic figure of Father MacTurnan tempted me. I wrote *A Letter to Rome* and *A Play-House in the Waste;* and as fast as these stories were written they were translated into Irish and published in a very pretty book of which nobody took any notice, and that the Gaelic League could not be persuaded to put in its window; and one evening a disheartened man was driven to the bitter extremity of collecting his manuscripts for a London publisher. The cheque they brought back on account of royalties did not soothe me; in 1903 England was hateful on account of the Boer War, and the sale of one hundred copies of the book that I could not read would have pleased me more than ten thousand of the book that I could. In a word, I was hipped with my book, and willingly forgot it in the excitement of *The Lake,* a thing an author should never do, for to forget a book or to speak contemptuously of it brings bad luck. And so Synge was raised up against me in Ireland, and for the last ten years we have been thinking and talking of him as the one man who saw Irish life truly and wrote it candidly.

It was just as if on purpose to make an omadaun of me that Yeats brought him over from Paris in the year 1903, though he had no English on him at the time, only the like that's heard in the National Schools, and if you don't believe me, will you be throwing your eye over the things he wrote in them days for the weekly papers, and faith you'll see the editors were right to fire them out. Wasn't he dreaming, too, he could be writing like a French

fellow of the name of Loti, that knew the trick with a couple of twists of the pen of turning every country in the wide world into a sweet-shop? But 'tis little of the taste of sugar-candy he got into his articles, and his book about the Aran Islands has more of the tang of old leather, like as if he'd be chewing the big brogues he did be always wearing on his feet. And, morebetoken, his language in the same book is as bald as the coat of a mangy dog, and trapsed along over a page of print like the clutter of a horse that was gone in the legs. It's many a heart scald this same must have given to my bold Yeats, for it's the grand judge entirely he is of the shape and the colour and the sound of words. So one day he up and said to Synge: "Give up your schoolmaster words that have no guts left in them, and leave off thinking of Loti and his barley-sugar, and go down into the County Wicklow and listen to what the people do be saying to 'other when they're at their ease without any notion of an ear cocked to carry off what they say. I hear tell that they speak a language that isn't worn out yet, and that has some of the youth of the world in it. I'd like to write in it myself, but I'd be afeared of muddying the clear English well that I'm used to dabbling in. Besides, if you pick it up anyway decent you might yet prove to the world that it wasn't a mare's nest I found when I discovered you," he said. And if Synge didn't pack up his few duds and tramp off that very minute, and if he hadn't the luck of the old boy himself in finding a lodging in a house in the hills of Wicklow that was like as if it was made on purpose for him—a room over the kitchen with an old broken boarded floor to it, the way he could see and hear all that was going on below, and nobody a penny the wiser but himself. Lying flat on his belly, with an ear or an eye to the slits, he took in all that was said and done, and put it down in a bookeen with the stump of a pencil and made a play out of it.

There is the pretty idiom of the Irish peasants as they chatter it along the roads, about their firesides, in the market-places, reported truthfully without exaggeration or refinements. But Synge put polish upon it and enlivened it with bright colours, and drew out of it the poetry of the country with which it is saturated as with dew. We listened delighted to *The Shadow of the Glen,* admitting to ourselves as we sat in our seats and to our friends as we left the hall that we preferred the cooing of Synge's dialogue to grey thoughts. We told him so in the street, and he went away to the Aran Islands for the summer-time, hoping to return in the autumn with another play, written in the same idiom, of course, but enriched by direct translation from the Irish. Why good English can be discovered by translating word for word from the Irish is one of the many great mysteries that beset our lives; but it is so. And when the news was passed round that Synge had brought back a play from Aran, we assembled in the Molesworth Hall, and it seemed to us that he had raised a tombstone over the intellectual drama. Dear Edward was the only dissident; he averred, and stood stiffly to it, that he hated peasant language. Yeats cried: "Sophocles!" and then revising his judgment, said: "No, Æschylus." John Eglinton, Æ, and myself looked upon these two plays as two remarkable exercises in language. We were interested; we approved the plays, and on tiptoe Dublin waited for Synge's new play, which came two years after, *The Well of the Saints,* another remarkable exercise in language, hardly more; for the play is but an adaptation of Clemenceau's *Voile du Bonheur,* with an Irish couple substituted for the Chinese couple and country idiom for Clemenceau's Parisian speech. But Synge's indebtedness did not trouble us; why should it? we asked. Is not a plagiarist one who spoils the original text, and an original writer one who improves upon his predecessor? And satisfied with this

definition, we waited, and whenever a circle of men and women drew round a fire, the subject of the *Playboy* was discussed. Yeats had communicated it so that we might be prepared to accept a parricide as a hero, and a Mayo village as nothing loath to do the same. At first sight the subject seemed wildly improbable, having no roots in human nature, but it was defended on the ground that brigands have always been popular heroes. And when the play was produced, our little group discovered extenuating circumstances for Christy Mahon. Into an extremely ingenious paradoxical story, Synge had brought real men and women, and amazed we asked each other how it was that Synge, who had never before shown any sense of form, should suddenly become possessed of an exquisite construction. We fell to wondering how the miracle had come about, and we continued wondering, and myself was still head-scratching in *Vale,* asking how Synge had sprung at once out of pure board-school English into a beautiful style, finding it in an idiom that had hitherto been used only as a means of comic relief. Tricks of speech a parrot can learn, but it is impossible to learn through a crack how character acts and reacts upon character. Never before did anyone hear that the intelligence may be lifted through eavesdropping on to a higher plane. Yeats told us that Synge read only Racine and Clement Marot; but we turned up our noses at these herrings, and the history of *The Playboy* was wrapped in unsearchable mystery until I began to read *The Untilled Field* for this new edition, and found myself thinking that if perchance any of my writings should survive me for a few years, as likely as not it would be these stories. And as this little vanity dispersed, I became more and more interested, for it seemed to me that I had come upon the source of Synge's inspiration. *The Untilled Field* was a landmark in Anglo-Irish literature, a new departure, and Synge could not have passed it by without looking into

it. It was not Racine nor Clement Marot. I would not, however, seem invidious to Synge's fame; my hope is not to pluck a leaf from the wreath that Yeats has placed upon his brow. I would merely explain his talent, and if that be impossible, I would explain how he came by it; to do this with becoming modesty is surely commendable. And if my critics think that I am exaggerating the importance of *The Untilled Field* in Synge's literary life, they will have to seek for another explanation, and for all I know they may prefer to fall back on Yeats's terrible great conjurations in the Nassau Hotel: Yeats standing over an entranced Synge, his pearl pale, or is it his ivory hand sweeping the strings of a harp of applewood, rousing a masterpiece out of the abyss.

THE UNTILLED FIELD

THE UNTILLED FIELD

THE EXILE

CHAP. I.

PAT PHELAN'S pigs were ready for Castlebar market, but so were his bullocks, and he was of a mind to send his son James with the bullocks to Westpost fair where they would fetch a higher price. But James was set on staying at home to help Catherine with the churning, and his son Peter was a bad hand at a bargain. "The divil a worse in the county of Mayo," he said to himself, as he smoked his pipe in front of his two sons, and they sitting on the other side of the fireplace facing him. "Now, what's to be done?" he asked himself; and as if Peter had guessed what was passing in his father's mind, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and bade his father and brother, "Good-night."

As soon as the door was closed behind him, Pat said:

"Now, James, what do you be thinking? Are we safe to send Pether with the bullocks to the fair?"

"Do ye mane he won't be getting the full price for them?"

"Well, I'm not sure, you see; for myself would be getting as much as thirteen pound ten a head for them, I'm thinking."

"You should, indeed!"

"I was thinking, James, that they might be bating him down, for his thoughts do be often away—a bad habit

while buying or selling. . . . But wouldn't you like to be going with him, James?"

A cloud came into James's face, and he said: "It's time we were getting into our beds."

"I wouldn't be saying you were wrong, James. Wisdom often comes to us in our beds, and unless a dream is put upon me I think I must be letting the bullocks go with Pether; it'll be easier selling them than the pigs. But now you won't wake him. At three you'll just push him out of bed with your foot, and there will be some breakfast for him on the table."

It was while eating the fried eggs that Pat gave Peter his orders. He would meet him about midday at the cross-roads. And he was there waiting for his son sure enough about eleven o'clock, his pigs having gone from him sooner than he had expected, the buyers being at him the moment they had cast their eyes over the pigs. "Just the kind of pig we do be wanting for the Liverpool market." He had caught the words out of the mouth of one jobber whispering in the ear of his mate. Michael was right; they were fine pigs. And, sitting on the stile waiting, he had begun to turn it over in his mind that if he had gotten five shillings more than he had expected for the pigs, it was reasonable to suppose that Peter might be getting fourteen pounds a head for the bullocks, they being better value than the pigs. Well, if he did, it would be a great day for them all, and if he got no more than thirteen pounds ten shillings it would be a great day all the same. And so did he go on dreaming till, looking up the road suddenly, whom should he see coming down the road but Peter and the bullocks in front of him.

"Well, now, can a man believe his own eyes?" he said. "For all I can see, they're me own bullocks, three of the finest I ever sent to a fair, and they coming back from the fair unsold."

It was a long story that Peter had to tell him about

the two men that had offered him eleven pounds ten shillings, and who, when he wouldn't sell them at that, had stood laughing at the bullocks, doing their level best to keep off other buyers. Peter was given to sulking when anybody found fault with him, and so Pat let him go on talking without saying a word, the bullocks trotting in front of them till they were about five miles from home.

"And fifteen miles is hard on fat animals," Pat kept saying to himself, "and this day I am six pounds out of pocket—six pounds out of pocket, if I take into account the price of their keep."

And while Pat was thinking, Peter kept on talking and telling his story again and again till they came to Michael Quinn's public-house, and it was there he asked his father—

"Well, father, how did the pigs do with you at the fair?"

Pat Phelan was too heart-sick to answer him, and he had to say his words again and again.

"Now, father, did you get three pounds apiece for the pigs? Will ye be telling me?"

"I did, and three pounds five."

"Wasn't that a fine price—one that we might have a drink out of?"

It seemed to Peter that the men inside were laughing at him, or at the lemonade he was drinking, and, seeing among them one who had been interfering with him all day, he told him he would put him out of the house, and he would have done it if Mrs. Quinn had not spoken up saying that no one put a man out of her house without her leave.

"Go out before me. Do you hear me talking to you, Pether? If you can't best them at the fair, it will be little good it will be doing you to put them out of the public-house afterwards."

And on that Peter swore he would never go to a fair

again, and they walked on until they came to the priest's house.

"It was bad for me when I listened to you and James. If I hadn't I might have been in Maynooth now."

"How can you be saying that? Didn't yourself come home talking of the polis?"

"Wasn't that after?"

"What do I be hearing you saying—that I left Maynooth for the police?" And Peter talked on, telling of the authors he had read with Father Tom—Cæsar, Virgil, even Quintilian. The priest had said Quintilian was too hard for him, and Pat Phelan was in doubt whether the difficulty of Quintilian was a sufficient reason for preferring the police to the priesthood.

"Anyway, it isn't a girl that's troubling him," he said to himself. And he looked at Peter, and wondered how it was that Peter did not want to be married, for he was a great big fellow, over six feet high, one that many a girl would take a fancy to. Pat Phelan had long had his eye on a girl for Peter, and Peter's failure to sell the bullocks brought to mind all the advantages of this marriage, and he began to talk to his son, who listened, and seemed to take an interest in all that was said, expressing now and then a doubt if the girl would marry him; the possibility that she might not turning his thoughts, so it seemed to his father, once again towards the priesthood.

"Well, Pether, is it the cassock or the belt you're after?"

The bullocks stopped to graze, and Peter's doubts threw Pat Phelan fairly out of his humour.

"If it's a priest you want to be, go in there, and Father Tom will tell you what you must do, and I'll drive the bullocks home myself."

And on that Pat laid his hand on the priest's green gate, and Peter walked through.

CHAP. II.

THERE were trees about the priest's house, and there were two rooms, on the right and left of the front door. The parlour was on the left, and when Peter came in the priest was sitting reading in his mahogany armchair. Peter wondered if it were this very mahogany chair that had put the idea of being a priest into his head. Just now, while walking with his father, he had been thinking that they had not even a wooden armchair in their house, though it was the best house in the village—only some stools and some plain wooden chairs.

The priest could see that Peter had come to him for a purpose. But Peter did not speak; he sat raising his pale, perplexed eyes, looking at the priest from time to time, thinking that if he told Father Tom of his failure at the fair, Father Tom might think he only wished to become a priest because he had no taste for farming.

"You said, Father Tom, if I worked hard I should be able to read Quintilian in six months."

The priest's face always lighted up at the name of a classical author, and Peter said he was sorry he had been taken away from his studies. But he had been thinking the matter over, and his mind was quite made up, and he was sure he would sooner be a priest than anything else.

"My boy, I knew you would never put on the policeman's belt. The bishop will hold an examination for the places that are vacant in Maynooth." Peter promised to work hard, and he walked home, thinking that everything was at last decided, when suddenly, without warning, when he was thinking of something else, his heart misgave him. It was as if he heard a voice saying: "My boy, I don't think you will ever put on the cassock. You will never walk with the biretta on your head." The priest had said that he did not believe he would ever

buckle on the policeman's belt. He was surprised to hear the priest say this, though he had often heard himself thinking the same thing. What surprised and frightened him now was that he heard himself saying he would never put on the cassock and the biretta. It is frightening to hear yourself saying you are not going to do the thing you have just made up your mind you will do.

He had often thought he would like to put the money he would get out of the farm into a shop, but when it came to the point of deciding he had not been able to make up his mind. He had always had a great difficulty in knowing what was the right thing to do. His uncle William had never thought of anything but the priesthood. James never thought of anything but the farm. A certain friend of his had never thought of anything but going to America. It was strange to know from the beginning. . . . It was like an animal. He heard somebody call him. "Now, who can it be?" he asked himself. And who was it but Catherine, come to tell him for sure that she was going to marry James? She was another that always knew her own mind. He had heard tell that James wasn't the one she wanted, but Peter did not believe that, and he looked at Catherine and admired her face, and thought what a credit she would be to the family, for no one wore such beautifully knitted stockings as Catherine, and no one's boots were so prettily laced.

But not knowing exactly what to say, he asked her if she had come from their house, and he went on talking, telling her she'd find nobody in the parish like James; that James was the best judge of cattle in the parish; and he said a great deal more in James's favour, till he saw that Catherine did not care to talk about James at all.

"I dare say all you say is right, Pether; but you see he's your brother."

And then, fearing she had said something hurtful, she

told him that she liked James as much as a girl could like a man who wasn't going to be her husband.

"And are you sure, Catherine, that James is not going to be your husband?"

"Yes," she said, "quite sure."

"Now, isn't it wonderful like to be sure like that, for meself is never sure; and I don't know that I'd like to be if I could." And Peter went away wondering why he hadn't told her he was going to Maynooth; for no one would have been able to advise him as well as Catherine, she had such good sense.

CHAP. III.

THERE was a quarter of a mile between the two houses, and while Peter was talking to Catherine, Pat Phelan was listening to his son James, who was telling his father that Catherine had said she would not marry him.

Pat was over sixty, but, all the same, old age seemed a long way from him; as a fine old oak, gnarled, without a withered bough and full of sap, he seemed to everybody; his long, thin, and shapely nose and his keen eyes drew attention to him. James was like him, but without the picturesqueness and without the streak of silliness that one liked in Peter. James sat holding his hands to the blaze, and when Peter opened the half-door, awaking the dozen hens that roosted on the beam, he glanced from one to the other, for he suspected his father to be telling James how he had failed to sell the bullocks. But the tone of his father's voice when he asked him what had detained him on the road put a doubt in his mind; and he remembered that Catherine had said she would not marry James.

"I met Catherine on the road, and I could do no less than walk as far as her door with her."

"You could do no less than that, Pether," said James.

"And what do you mean by that, James?"

"Only this, that it is always the crooked way, Pether; for if it had been you that had asked her she would have had you and jumping."

"She'd have had me!"

"And now, don't you think you had better run after her, Pether, and ask her if she'll have you?"

"It's hurtful, James, you should think such a thing of me. *I* to try to get a girl from you!"

"I didn't mean that, Pether; but if she won't have me, you had better try if you can get her."

And suddenly Peter felt a resolve come into his heart, and his manner grew exultant.

"I've seen Father Tom, and he said I can pass the examination. I'm going to be a priest."

And when they were lying down side by side Peter said, "James, it will be all right." As there was a great heart-sickness on his brother, he put out his hand. "As sure as I lie here she will be lying next you before this day twelvemonths. Yes, James, in this very bed, lying here where I am lying now."

"I don't believe it, Pether."

"I do, then."

And not to stand in the way of his brother's marriage he took some money from his father and went to live at Father Tom's. And it was late one night when he went to bid them good-bye at home, having passed the bishop's examination all right.

"What makes you so late, Pether?"

"Well, James, I didn't want to meet Catherine on the road."

"You're a good boy, Pether," said the father, "and God will reward you for the love you bear your brother. I don't think there are two better men in all this world. God is good, and he giving me two such sons."

Then the three sat round the fire, and Pat Phelan began to talk family history.

"Well, Pether, you see, there has always been a priest in the family, and it would be a pity if there's not one in this generation. In '48 your grand-uncles joined the rebels, and they had to leave the country. You have an uncle a priest, and you are just like your uncle William."

And then James talked, but he did not seem to know very well what he was saying, and his father told him to stop—that Peter was going where God had called him.

"And you'll tell her," Peter said, getting up, "that I've gone."

"I haven't the heart for telling her such a thing. She'll be finding it out soon enough."

Outside the house—for he was sleeping at Father Tom's that night—Peter thought there was little luck in James's eyes; inside the house Pat Phelan and James thought that Peter was settled for life.

"He'll be a fine man standing on an altar," James said, "and perhaps he'll be a bishop some day."

"And you'll see her when you're done reaping, and you won't forget what Pether told you," said Pat Phelan.

And, after reaping, James put on his coat and walked up the hillside, where he thought he would find Catherine.

"I hear Pether has left you," she said, as he opened the gate to let the cows through.

"He came last night to bid us good-bye."

And they followed the cows under the tall hedges.

"I shall be reaping to-morrow," he said. "I will see you at the same time."

And henceforth he was always at hand to help her to drive her cows home; and every night, as he sat with his father by the fire, Pat Phelan expected James to tell him about Catherine. One evening he came back over-

come, looking so wretched that his father could see that Catherine had told him she would not marry him.

"She won't have me," he said.

"A man can always get a girl if he tries long enough," his father answered, hoping to encourage him.

"That would be true enough for another. Catherine knows she'll never get Pether. Another man might get her, but I'm always reminding her of Pether."

She had told him the truth; he was sure of that when she said that if she didn't marry Peter she would marry no one, and James felt like dying.

At last he said, "How is that?"

"I don't know. I don't know, James. But you mustn't talk to me about marriage again."

He had had to promise her not to speak of marriage again: he kept his word, and at the end of the year she asked him if he had any news of Peter.

"The last news we had of him was about a month ago, and he said he hoped to be admitted into the minor orders."

A few days afterwards he heard that Catherine had decided to go into a convent.

He seemed no longer fit for work on the farm, and was seen about the road smoking, and sometimes he went down to the ball-alley, and sat watching the games in the evening. It was thought that he would take to drink, but he took to fishing instead, and was out all day in his little boat on the lake, however hard the wind might blow. The fisherman said he had seen him in the part of the lake where the wind blew the hardest, and that he could hardly pull against the waves.

"His mind is away. I don't think he'll do any good in this country," his father said.

And the old man was very sad, for when James was gone he would have no one, and he did not feel he would be able to work the farm for many years longer. He and

James used to sit smoking on either side of the fireplace, saying nothing, Pat Phelan knowing that James was thinking of America, until one evening, as they were sitting like this, the door was opened suddenly.

"Pether!" said James. And he jumped up from the fire to welcome his brother.

"It is good for sore eyes to see the sight of you again," said Pat Phelan. "Well, tell us the news. Had we known you were coming we'd have sent the cart to fetch you."

As Peter did not answer, they began to think that something must have happened. Perhaps Peter was not going to become a priest after all, and would stay at home with his father to learn to work the farm.

"You see, I didn't know myself until yesterday. It was only yesterday that——"

"So you are not going to be a priest? We are glad to hear that, Pether."

"How is that?"

He had thought over what he should say, and without waiting to hear why they were glad, he told them the professor, who overlooked his essays, had refused to recognize their merits—he had condemned the best things in them; and Peter said it was extraordinary that such a man should be appointed to such a place. And then he told them that the Church afforded little chances for the talents of young men unless they had a great deal of influence.

And they sat listening to him, hearing how the college might be reformed. He had a gentle, winning way of talking, and his father and brother forgot their own misfortunes thinking how they might help him.

"Well, Pether, you have come back none too soon."

"And how is that? What have you been doing since I went away? You all wanted to hear about Maynooth."

"Of course we did, my boy. Tell him, James."

"Oh! it is nothing particular," said James. "It is only this, Pether—I'm going to America."

"And who'll work the farm?"

"Well, Pether, we were thinking that you might work it yourself."

"I work the farm! Going to America, James! But what about Catherine?"

"That's what I'm coming to, Pether. She has gone into a convent. And that's what's happened since you went away. I can't stop here, Pether—I'll never do a hand's turn in Ireland—and father will be getting too old to go to the fairs before long. That's what we were thinking when you came in."

There was a faint tremble in his voice, and Peter saw how heart-sick his brother was.

"I will do my best, James."

"I knew you would."

"Yes, I will," said Peter; and he sat down by the fire. And his father said:

"You are not smoking, Pether."

"No," he said; "I've given up smoking."

"Will you drink something?" said James. "We have got a drain of whisky in the house."

"No, I have had to give up spirits. It doesn't agree with me. And I don't take tea in the morning. Have you any cocoa in the house?"

It was not the kind of cocoa he liked, but he said he would be able to manage.

CHAP. IV.

AND when the old man came through the doorway in the morning buttoning his braces, he saw Peter stirring his cocoa. There was something absurd as well as something attractive in Peter, and his father had to laugh when he said he couldn't eat American bacon.

"My stomach wouldn't retain it. I require very little, but that little must be the best."

And when James took him into the farmyard, he noticed that Peter crossed the yard like one who had never been in a farmyard before; he looked less like a farmer than ever, and when he looked at the cows, James wondered if he could be taught to see the difference between an Alderney and a Durham.

"There's Kate," he said; "she's a good cow, as good a cow as we have, and we can't get any price for her because of that hump on her back."

They went to the sties; there were three pigs there and a great sow with twelve little bonhams, and the little ones were white with silky hair, and Peter asked how old they were, and when they would be fit for killing.

"Last year we had oats in the Holly field; next year you'll sow potatoes there." And he explained the rotation of crops. "And now," he said, "we'll go down to Crow's Oak. You have never done any ploughing, Pether; I'll show you."

It was extraordinary how little Peter knew. He could not put the harness on the horse, and he reminded James that he had gone into the post-office when he left school. James gave in to him that the old red horse was hard to drive, but James could drive him better than Peter could lead him; and Peter marvelled at the skill with which James raised his hand from the shaft of the plough and struck the horse with the rein whilst he kept the plough steady with the other hand.

"Now, Pether, you must try again."

At the end of the headland where the plough turned, Peter always wanted to stop and talk about something; but James said they would have to get on with the work, and Peter walked after the plough, straining after it for three hours, and then he said: "James, let me drive the horse. I can do no more."

"You won't feel it so much when you are accustomed to it," said James.

Anything seemed to him better than a day's ploughing: even getting up at three in the morning to go to a fair.

He went to bed early, as he used to, and they talked of him over the fire, as they used to. But however much they talked, they never seemed to find what they were seeking —his vocation—until one evening an idea suddenly rose out of their talk.

"A good wife is the only thing for Pether," said Pat.

And they went on thinking.

"A husband would be better for her," said Pat Phelan, "than a convent."

"I can't say I agree with you there. Think of all the good them nuns be doing."

"She isn't a nun yet," said Pat Phelan.

And the men smoked on awhile, and they ruminated as they smoked.

"It would be better, James, that Pether got her than that she stayed in a convent."

"I wouldn't say that," said James.

"You see," said his father, "she didn't go into the convent because she had a calling, but because she was crossed in love."

And after another long while James said, "It is a bitter dose, I'm thinking, father, but you must go and tell her that Pether has left Maynooth."

"And what would the Reverend Mother be saying to me if I went to her with such a story as that? Isn't your heart broke enough already, James, without wanting me to be breaking it still more? Sure, James, you could never see her married to Pether?"

"If she married Pether I'd be free to go to America, and that would be the only thing for me to do."

"That would be poor comfort for you, James."

"Well, it is the best I shall get, to see Pether settled,

and to know that there will be someone to look after you, father."

"You were always a good son, James."

They talked on, and as they talked it became clearer to them that someone must go to-morrow to the convent and tell Catherine that Peter had left Maynooth.

"But wouldn't it be a pity," said Pat Phelan, "to tell her this if Pether is not going to marry her at all?"

"I will have him out of his bed," said James, "and he'll tell us before this fire if he will or won't."

"It's a serious thing you are doing, James, to get a girl out of a convent, I'm thinking."

"It will be on my advice that you will be doing this, father; and now I'll go and get Pether out of his bed."

And Peter was brought in, asking what they wanted of him at this hour of the night; and when they told him what they had been talking about and the plans they had been making, he said he would be catching his death of cold, and they threw some sods of turf on the fire.

"'Tis against myself that I am asking a girl to leave the convent, even for you, Pether," said James. "But what else can we do?"

"Pether will tell us if it is a sin that we'd be doing."

"Surely we should tell Catherine all the truth before she takes her vows?"

"Pether, I'd take it as a great kindness. I shall never do a hand's turn in this country. I want to get to America. It will be the saving of me."

"And now, Pether," said his father, "tell us for sure if you'll have the girl?"

"Faith I will, though I never thought of marriage, if it be pleasing James." Seeing how heart-sick his brother was, he said, "I can't say I like her as you like her; but if she likes me I'll promise to do right by her. James, you're going away; we may never see you again. It's a great pity. And now you'll let me go back to bed."

"Pether, I knew you would not say no to me; I can't bear this any longer."

"And now," said Peter, "let me go back to bed. I am catching my death of cold."

And he ran back to his room, and left his brother and father talking by the fire.

CHAP. V.

PAT thought the grey mare would take him in faster than the old red horse; and the old man sat, his legs swinging over the shaft, wondering what he should say to the Reverend Mother, and how she would listen to his story; and when he came to the priest's house a great wish came upon him to ask the priest's advice. The priest was walking up his little lawn reading his breviary, and a great fear came on Pat Phelan, and he thought he must ask the priest what he would do.

The priest heard the story over the little wall, and he was sorry for the old man.

It took him a long time to tell the story, and when he was finished the priest said:

"But where are you going, Pat?"

"That's what I stopped to tell you, your reverence. I was thinking I might be going to the convent to tell Catherine that Pether has come back."

"Well, it wasn't yourself that thought of doing such a thing as that, Pat Phelan."

But at every word the priest said Pat Phelan's face grew more stubborn, and at last he said:

"Well, your reverence, that isn't the advice I expected from you," and he struck the mare with the ends of the reins and let her trot up the hill. Nor did the mare stop trotting till she had reached the top of the hill, and Pat Phelan had never known her do such a thing before.

From the top of the hill there was a view of the bog, and Pat thought of the many fine loads of turf he had had out of that bog, and the many young fellows he had seen there cutting turf. "But everyone is leaving the country," the old man said to himself, and his chin dropped into his shirt-collar, and he held the reins loosely, letting the mare trot or walk as she liked. And he let many pass him without bidding them the time of day, for he was too much overcome by his own grief to notice anyone.

The mare trotted gleefully; soft clouds curled over the low horizon far away, and the sky was blue overhead; and the poor country was very beautiful in the still autumn weather, only it was empty. He passed two or three fine houses that the gentry had left to caretakers long ago. The fences were gone, cattle strayed through the woods, the drains were choked with weeds, the stagnant water was spreading out into the fields, and Pat Phelan noticed these things, for he remembered what this country was forty years ago. The devil a bit of lonesomeness there was in it then.

He asked a girl if they would be thatching the house that autumn; but she answered that the thatch would last out the old people, and she was going to join her sister in America.

"She's right—they're all there now. Why should anyone stop here?" the old man said.

The mare tripped, and he took this to be a sign that he should turn back. But he did not go back. Very soon the town began, in broken pavements and dirty cottages; going up the hill there were some slated roofs, but there was no building of any importance except the church.

At the end of the main street, where the trees began again, the convent stood in the middle of a large garden, and Pat Phelan remembered he had heard that the nuns were doing well with their dairy and their laundry.

He knocked, and a lay-sister peeped through the grat-

ing, and then she opened the door a little way, and at first he thought he would have to go back without seeing either Catherine or the Reverend Mother. For he had got no farther than "Sister Catherine," when the lay-sister cut him short with the news that Sister Catherine was in retreat, and could see no one. The Reverend Mother was busy.

"But," said Pat, "you're not going to let Catherine take vows without hearing me."

"If 'tis about Sister Catherine's vows——"

"Yes, 'tis about them I've come, and I must see the Reverend Mother."

The lay-sister said Sister Catherine was going to be clothed at the end of the week.

"Well, that's just the reason I've come here."

On that the lay-sister led him into the parlour, and went in search of the Reverend Mother.

The floor was so thickly beeswaxed that the rug slipped under his feet, and, afraid lest he might fall down, he stood quite still, awed by the pious pictures on the walls, and by the large books upon the table, and by the poor-box, and by the pious inscriptions. He began to think how much easier was this pious life than the life of the world—the rearing of children, the failure of crops, and the loneliness. Here life slips away without one perceiving it, and it seemed a pity to bring her back to trouble. He stood holding his hat in his old hands, and the time seemed very long. At last the door opened, and a tall woman with sharp, inquisitive eyes came in.

"You've come to speak to me about Sister Catherine?"

"Yes, my lady."

"And what have you got to tell me about her?"

"Well, my son thought and I thought last night—we were all thinking we had better tell you—last night was the night that my son came back."

At the word Maynooth a change of expression came

into her face, but when he told that Peter no longer wished to be a priest her manner began to grow hostile again, and she got up from her chair and said:

"But really, Mr. Phelan, I have got a great deal of business to attend to."

"But, my lady, you see Catherine wanted to marry my son Pether, and 'tis because he went to Maynooth that she came here. I don't think she'd want to be a nun if she knew that he didn't want to be a priest."

"I can't agree with you, Mr. Phelan, in that. I have seen a great deal of Sister Catherine—she has been with us now for nearly a year—and if she ever entertained the wishes you speak of, I feel sure she has forgotten them. Her mind is now set on higher things."

"You may be right, my lady. It isn't for the likes of me to argue a point with you; but I have come a long way to see Catherine herself——"

"That is impossible. Catherine is in retreat."

"So the lay-sister told me; but I thought——"

"Sister Catherine is going to be clothed next Saturday, and I can assure you, Mr. Phelan, that the wishes you tell me of are forgotten. I know her very well. I can answer for Sister Catherine."

The rug slipped under the peasant's feet and his eyes wandered round the room; and the Reverend Mother told him how busy she was, she really couldn't talk to him any more that day.

"You see, it all rests with Sister Catherine herself."

"That's just it," said the old man; "that's just it, my lady. My son Pether, who has come from Maynooth, told us last night that Catherine should know everything that has happened, so that she mayn't be sorry afterwards. Only for this I wouldn't come at all. I wouldn't be troubling you."

"I am sorry, Mr. Phelan, that your son Peter has left Maynooth. It is sad indeed when one finds that one

hasn't a vocation. But that happens sometimes. I don't think it will be Catherine's case. And now, Mr. Phelan, I must ask you to excuse me," and the Reverend Mother persuaded the unwilling peasant into the passage, and he followed the lay-sister down the passage to the gate and got into his cart again.

" No wonder at all," he said to himself; " it wouldn't be suiting them to let Catherine out, and that after getting that fine farm. And I'm sure there isn't one of them in it could boil pig's food like Catherine herself."

At the very same moment the same thoughts passed through the Reverend Mother's mind. She had not left the parlour yet, and stood thinking how she should manage if Catherine were to leave them. " Why," she asked, " should he choose to leave Maynooth at such a time? It is indeed unfortunate. There is nothing," she reflected, " that gives a woman so much strength as to receive the veil. She always feels stronger after her clothing. She feels that the world is behind her."

The Reverend Mother reflected that perhaps it would be better for Catherine's sake and for Peter's sake—indeed, for everyone's sake—if she were not to tell Catherine of Pat Phelan's visit until after the clothing. She might tell Catherine three months hence. The disadvantage of this would be that Catherine might hear that Peter had left Maynooth. In a country place news of this kind cannot be kept out of a convent. And if Catherine were going to leave, it were better that she should leave them now than leave them six months hence, after her clothing.

" There are many ways of looking at it," the Reverend Mother reflected. " If I don't tell her, she may never hear it. I might tell her later, when she has taught one of the nuns how to manage the farm." She took two steps towards the door and stopped to think again, and she was thinking when a knock came to the door. She

answered mechanically, " Come in," and Catherine wondered at the Reverend Mother's astonishment.

" I wish to speak to you, dear mother," she said timidly. But seeing the Reverend Mother's face change expression, she said, " Perhaps another time will suit you better."

The Reverend Mother stood looking at her, irresolute; and Catherine, who had never seen the Reverend Mother irresolute before, wondered what was passing in her mind.

" I know you are busy, dear mother, but what I've come to tell you won't take very long."

" Well, then, tell it to me, my child."

" It is only this, Reverend Mother. I had better be telling you now, and you are expecting the bishop, and my clothing fixed for the end of the week, and——"

" And," said the Reverend Mother, " you feel you aren't certain of your vocation."

" That's it, dear mother. I didn't like to tell you before. I was thinking that the feeling would pass away; but it isn't everyone that has a vocation."

The Reverend Mother asked Catherine to sit down by her; and Catherine told her she had come to the convent because she was crossed in love, and not as the others came, because they wished to give up their wills to God.

" Our will is the most precious thing in us, and that is why the best thing we can do is to give it up to you, for in giving it up to you, dear mother, we are giving it up to God. I know all these things, but——"

" You should have told me of this when you came here, Catherine, and then I shouldn't have advised you to come to live with us."

" Mother, you must forgive me. My heart was broke, and I couldn't do else. And you told me yourself I made the dairy a success."

" If you had stayed with us, Catherine, you would have made the dairy a success; but we have got no one to take

your place. However, since it is the will of God, I suppose we must try to get on as well as we can without you. And now tell me, Catherine, when it was you changed your mind. It was only the other day you told me you wished to become a nun. You said you were most anxious for your clothing. How is it that you have changed your mind?"

Catherine's eyes brightened, and speaking like one illuminated by some inward light, she said:

"It was the second day of my retreat, mother. I was walking in the garden where the great cross stands amid the rocks. Sister Angela and Sister Mary were with me, and I was listening to what they were saying, when suddenly my thoughts were taken away and I remembered those at home. I remembered Mr. Phelan, and James, who wanted to marry me, but whom I would not marry; and it seemed to me that I saw him leaving his father—it seemed to me that I saw him going away to America. I don't know how it was—you won't believe me, dear mother—but I saw the ship that is to take him away lying in the harbour. And then I thought of the old man sitting at home with no one to look after him, and it came over me suddenly that my duty was not here, but there. Of course you won't agree with me, but I can't resist it, it was a call."

"But the Evil One, my dear child, calls us too; we must be careful not to mistake the devil's call for God's call."

"I'm sure, mother." Tears came to Catherine's eyes, she began to weep. "I can't be arguing with you, mother, I only know——" She could not speak for sobbing, and between her sobs she said, "I only know that I must go home."

She recovered herself very soon, and the Reverend Mother took her hand and said:

"Well, my dear child, I shan't stand in your way."

Even the Reverend Mother could not help thinking that the man who got her would get a charming wife. Her face was rather long and white, and her eyes were full of tenderness. She had spoken out of so deep a conviction that the Reverend Mother had begun to believe that her mission was perhaps to look after this hapless young man; and when she told the Reverend Mother that yesterday she had felt a conviction that Peter was not going to be a priest, the Reverend Mother felt that she must tell her of Pat Phelan's visit.

" I did not tell you at once, my dear child, because I wished to know from yourself how you felt about this matter "; and the nun told Catherine that Peter had left Maynooth.

A glow came into the postulant's eyes.

" How did he know that I cared for him? " the girl said, half to herself, half to the nun.

" I suppose his father or his brother must have told him," the nun answered.

And then Catherine, fearing to show too much interest in things that the nun deemed frivolous, said, " I am sorry to leave before my work is done, ma'am. So it has all come true; it was extraordinary what I felt that morning in the garden," she said, returning to her joy.

" The saints, of course, have had visions. We believe in the visions of the saints."

" But after all, mother, there are many duties besides religious duties."

" I suppose, Catherine, you feel it to be your duty to look after this young man? "

" Yes, I think that is it. I must go now, mother, and see Sister Angela, and write out for her all I know about the farm, and what she is to do, for if one is not very careful with a farm one loses a great deal of money. There is no such thing as making two ends meet. One either makes money or loses money."

And then Catherine again seemed to be engulfed in some deep joy, out of which she roused herself with difficulty.

CHAP. VI.

WHEN her postulant left the room, the Reverend Mother wrote to Pat Phelan, asking him to come next morning with his cart to fetch Catherine. And next morning, when the lay-sister told Catherine that he was waiting for her, the Reverend Mother said:

"We shall be able to manage, Catherine. You have told Sister Angela everything, and you'll not forget to come to see us, I hope."

"Mr. Phelan," said the lay-sister, "told me to tell you that one of his sons is going to America to-day. Sister Catherine will have to go at once if she wishes to see him."

"I must see James. I must see him before he leaves for America. Oh," she said, turning to the Reverend Mother, "do you remember that I told you I had seen the ship? Everything has come true. You can't believe any longer that it is not a call."

Her box was in the cart, and as Pat turned the mare round he said: "I hope we won't be after missing James at the station. 'Twas because of that I came for you so early. I thought you'd be liking to see him."

"Why didn't you come earlier?" she cried. "I shall never be happy again if I don't see James."

The convent was already behind her, and her thoughts were now upon poor James, whose heart she had broken. She knew that Peter would never love her as well as James, but her vision in the garden consoled her, for she could no longer doubt that she was doing right in going to Peter, that her destiny was with him.

She knew the road well, she knew all the fields, every

house and every gap in the walls. Sign after sign went by; at last they were within sight of the station. The signal was still up, and the train had not gone yet; at the end of the platform she saw James and Peter. She let Pat Phelan drive the cart round; she could get to them quicker by running down the steps and crossing the line. The signal went down.

"Pether," she said, "we will have time to talk presently. I must speak to James now."

And they walked up the platform, leaving Peter to talk to his father.

"Paddy Maguire is outside," Pat said; "I asked him to stand at the mare's head."

"James," said Catherine, "it's bad news to hear you're going. Maybe we'll never see you again, and there is no time to be talking now, and me with so much to say."

"I am going away, Catherine, but maybe I will be coming back some day. I was going to say maybe you would be coming over after me; but the land is good land, and you'll be able to make a living out of it."

And then they spoke of Peter. James said he was too great a scholar for a farmer, and it was a pity he could not find out what he was fit for—for surely he was fit for something great after all.

And Catherine said:

"I shall be able to make something out of Pether."

His emotion almost overcame him, and Catherine looked aside so that she should not see his tears.

"'Tis no time for talking of Pether," she said. "You are going away, James, but you will come back. You'll find better women than me in America, James. I don't know what to say to you. The train will be here in a minute. I am distracted. But one day you will be coming back, and we'll be proud of you when you do. I'll build up the house, and then we'll be happy. Oh! here's

the train. Good-bye; you have been very good to me. Oh, James! when will I be seeing you again?"

Then the crowd swept them along, and James had to take his father's hand and his brother's hand. There were a great many people in the station—hundreds were going away in the same ship as James. The wailing relatives ran alongside of the train, waving their hands until they could no longer keep up. James waved a red handkerchief till the train disappeared in a cutting, and a moment after Catherine and Peter remembered they were standing side by side. They were going to be married in a few days! They started a little, hearing a step beside them. It was old Phelan.

"I think," he said, "we'd better be after getting home."

HOME SICKNESS

HE told the doctor he was due in the bar-room at eight o'clock in the morning; the bar-room was in a slum in the Bowery; and he had only been able to keep himself in health by getting up at five o'clock and going for long walks in the Central Park.

"A sea-voyage is what you want," said the doctor. "Why not go to Ireland for two or three months? You will come back a new man."

"I'd like to see Ireland again."

And he began to wonder how the people at home were getting on. The doctor was right. He thanked him, and three weeks after he landed in Cork.

As he sat in the railway-carriage he recalled his native village, built among the rocks of the large headland stretching out into the winding lake. He could see the houses and the streets, and the fields of the tenants, and the Georgian mansion and the owners of it; he and they had been boys together before he went to America. He remembered the villagers going every morning to the big house to work in the stables, in the garden, in the fields—mowing, reaping, digging, and Michael Malia building a wall; it was all as clear as if it were yesterday, yet he had been thirteen years in America; and when the train stopped at the station the first thing he did was to look round for any changes that might have come into it. It was the same blue limestone station as it was thirteen years ago, with the same five long miles between it and Duncannon. He had once walked these miles gaily, in little over an hour, carrying a heavy bundle on a stick, but he did not feel strong enough for the walk to-day,

though the evening tempted him to try it. A car was waiting at the station, and the boy, discerning from his accent and his dress that Bryden had come from America, plied him with questions, which Bryden answered rapidly, for he wanted to hear who were still living in the village, and if there was a house in which he could get a clean lodging. The best house in the village, he was told, was Mike Scully's, who had been away in a situation for many years, as a coachman in the King's County, but had come back and built a fine house with a concrete floor. The boy could recommend the loft, he had slept in it himself, and Mike would be glad to take in a lodger, he had no doubt. Bryden remembered that Mike had been in a situation at the big house. He had intended to be a jockey, but had suddenly shot up into a fine tall man, and had become a coachman instead; and Bryden tried to recall his face, but could only remember a straight nose and a somewhat dusky complexion.

So Mike had come back from King's County, and had built himself a house, had married—there were children for sure running about; while he, Bryden, had gone to America, but he had come back; perhaps he, too, would build a house in Duncannon, and—— His reverie was suddenly interrupted by the carman.

"There's Mike Scully," he said, pointing with his whip, and Bryden saw a tall, finely built, middle-aged man coming through the gates, who looked astonished when he was accosted, for he had forgotten Bryden even more completely than Bryden had forgotten him; and many aunts and uncles were mentioned before he began to understand.

"You've grown into a fine man, James," he said, looking at Bryden's great width of chest. "But you're thin in the cheeks, and you're very sallow in the cheeks too."

"I haven't been very well lately—that is one of the reasons I've come back; but I want to see you all again."

"And thousand welcome you are."

Bryden paid the carman, and wished him "Godspeed." They divided the luggage, Mike carrying the bag and Bryden the bundle, and they walked round the lake, for the townland was at the back of the domain; and while walking he remembered the woods thick and well-forested; now they were wind-worn, the drains were choked, and the bridge leading across the lake inlet was falling away. Their way led between long fields where herds of cattle were grazing; the road was broken—Bryden wondered how the villagers drove their carts over it, and Mike told him that the landlord could not keep it in repair, and he would not allow it to be kept in repair out of the rates, for then it would be a public road, and he did not think there should be a public road through his property.

At the end of many fields they came to the village, and it looked a desolate place, even on this fine evening, and Bryden remarked that the county did not seem to be as much lived in as it used to be. It was at once strange and familiar to see the chickens in the kitchen; and, wishing to re-knit himself to the old customs, he begged of Mrs. Scully not to drive them out, saying they reminded him of old times.

"And why wouldn't they?" Mike answered, "he being one of ourselves bred and born in Duncannon, and his father before him."

"Now, is it truth ye are telling me?" and she gave him her hand, after wiping it on her apron, saying he was heartily welcome, only she was afraid he wouldn't care to sleep in a loft.

"Why wouldn't I sleep in a loft, a dry loft! You're thinking a good deal of America over here," said he, "but I reckon it isn't all you think it. Here you work when you like and you sit down when you like; but when you've had a touch of blood-poisoning as I had, and when you have seen young people walking with a stick, you think that there is something to be said for old Ireland."

"You'll take a sup of milk, won't you? You must be dry," said Mrs. Scully.

And when he had drunk the milk Mike asked him if he would like to go inside or if he would like to go for a walk.

"Maybe resting you'd like to be."

And they went into the cabin and started to talk about the wages a man could get in America, and the long hours of work.

And after Bryden had told Mike everything about America that he thought of interest, he asked Mike about Ireland. But Mike did not seem to be able to tell him much. They were all very poor—poorer, perhaps, than when he left them.

"I don't think anyone except myself has a five-pound-note to his name."

Bryden hoped he felt sufficiently sorry for Mike. But after all Mike's life and prospects mattered little to him. He had come back in search of health, and he felt better already; the milk had done him good, and the bacon and the cabbage in the pot sent forth a savoury odour. The Scullys were very kind, they pressed him to make a good meal; a few weeks of country air and food, they said, would give him back the health he had lost in the Bowery; and when Bryden said he was longing for a smoke, Mike said there was no better sign than that. During his long illness he had never wanted to smoke, and he was a confirmed smoker.

It was comfortable to sit by the mild peat fire watching the smoke of their pipes drifting up the chimney, and all Bryden wanted was to be left alone; he did not want to hear of anyone's misfortunes, but about nine o'clock a number of villagers came in, and Bryden remembered one or two of them—he used to know them very well when he was a boy; their talk was as depressing as their appearance, and he could feel no interest whatever in them. He was not moved when he heard that Higgins the stone-

mason was dead; he was not affected when he heard that Mary Kelly, who used to go to do the laundry at the Big House, had married; he was only interested when he heard she had gone to America. No, he had not met her there; America is a big place. Then one of the peasants asked him if he remembered Patsy Carabine, who used to do the gardening at the Big House. Yes, he remembered Patsy well. He had not been able to do any work on account of his arm; his house had fallen in; he had given up his holding and gone into the poorhouse. All this was very sad, and to avoid hearing any further unpleasantness, Bryden began to tell them about America. And they sat round listening to him; but all the talking was on his side; he wearied of it; and looking round the group he recognized a ragged hunchback with grey hair; twenty years ago he was a young hunchback, and, turning to him, Bryden asked him if he were doing well with his five acres.

"Ah, not much. This has been a poor season. The potatoes failed; they were watery—there is no diet in them."

These peasants were all agreed that they could make nothing out of their farms. Their regret was that they had not gone to America when they were young; and after striving to take an interest in the fact that O'Connor had lost a mare and a foal worth forty pounds, Bryden began to wish himself back in the slum. And when they left the house he wondered if every evening would be like the present one. Mike piled fresh sods on the fire, and he hoped it would show enough light in the loft for Bryden to undress himself by.

The cackling of some geese in the street kept him awake, and he seemed to realize suddenly how lonely the country was, and he foresaw mile after mile of scanty fields stretching all round the lake with one little town in the far corner. A dog howled in the distance, and the fields and the boreens between him and the dog appeared

as in a crystal. He could hear Michael breathing by his wife's side in the kitchen, and he could barely resist the impulse to run out of the house, and he might have yielded to it, but he wasn't sure that he mightn't awaken Mike as he came down the ladder. His terror increased, and he drew the blanket over his head. He fell asleep and awoke and fell asleep again, and lying on his back he dreamed of the men he had seen sitting round the fireside that evening, like spectres they seemed to him in his dream. He seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes when he heard Mike calling him. He had come halfway up the ladder, and was telling him that breakfast was ready. "What kind of a breakfast will he give me?" Bryden asked himself as he pulled on his clothes. There were tea and hot griddle cakes for breakfast, and there were fresh eggs; there was sunlight in the kitchen, and he liked to hear Mike tell of the work he was going to be at in the farm—one of about fifteen acres, at least ten of it was grass; he grew an acre of potatoes, and some corn, and some turnips for his sheep. He had a nice bit of meadow, and he took down his scythe, and as he put the whetstone in his belt Bryden noticed a second scythe, and he asked Mike if he should go down with him and help him to finish the field.

"It's a long time since you've done any mowing, and it's heavier work than you think for. You'd better go for a walk by the lake." Seeing that Bryden looked a little disappointed, he added, "If you like you can come up in the afternoon and help me to turn the grass over." Bryden said he would, and the morning passed pleasantly by the lake shore—a delicious breeze rustled in the trees, and the reeds were talking together, and the ducks were talking in the reeds; a cloud blotted out the sunlight, and the cloud passed and the sun shone, and the reed cast its shadow again in the still water; there was a lapping always about the shingle; the magic of returning health was

sufficient distraction for the convalescent; he lay with his eyes fixed upon the castles, dreaming of the men that had manned the battlements; whenever a peasant driving a cart or an ass or an old woman with a bundle of sticks on her back went by, Bryden kept them in chat, and he soon knew the village by heart. One day the landlord from the Georgian mansion set on the pleasant green hill came along, his retriever at his heels, and stopped surprised at finding somebody whom he didn't know on his property. "What, James Bryden!" he said. And the story was told again how ill-health had overtaken him at last, and he had come home to Duncannon to recover. The two walked as far as the pine-wood, talking of the county, what it had been, the ruin it was slipping into, and as they parted Bryden asked for the loan of a boat.

"Of course, of course!" the landlord answered, and Bryden rowed about the islands every morning; and resting upon his oars looked at the old castles, remembering the prehistoric raiders that the landlord had told him about. He came across the stones to which the lake-dwellers had tied their boats, and these signs of ancient Ireland were pleasing to Bryden in his present mood.

As well as the great lake there was a smaller lake in the bog where the villagers cut their turf. This lake was famous for its pike, and the landlord allowed Bryden to fish there, and one evening when he was looking for a frog with which to bait his line he met Margaret Dirken driving home the cows for the milking. Margaret was the herdsman's daughter, and lived in a cottage near the Big House; but she came up to the village whenever there was a dance, and Bryden had found himself opposite to her in the reels. But until this evening he had had little opportunity of speaking to her, and he was glad to speak to someone, for the evening was lonely, and they stood talking together.

"You're getting your health again," she said, "and will be leaving us soon."

"I'm in no hurry."

"You're grand people over there; I hear a man is paid four dollars a day for his work."

"And how much," said James, "has he to pay for his food and for his clothes?"

Her cheeks were bright and her teeth small, white and beautifully even; and a woman's soul looked at Bryden out of her soft Irish eyes. He was troubled and turned aside, and catching sight of a frog looking at him out of a tuft of grass, he said:

"I have been looking for a frog to put upon my pike line."

The frog jumped right and left, and nearly escaped in some bushes, but he caught it and returned with it in his hand.

"It is just the kind of frog a pike will like," he said. "Look at its great white belly and its bright yellow back."

And without more ado he pushed the wire to which the hook was fastened through the frog's fresh body, and dragging it through the mouth he passed the hooks through the hind-legs and tied the line to the end of the wire.

"I think," said Margaret, "I must be looking after my cows; it's time I got them home."

"Won't you come down to the lake while I set my line?"

She thought for a moment and said:

"No, I'll see you from here."

He went down to the reedy tarn, and at his approach several snipe got up, and they flew above his head uttering sharp cries. His fishing-rod was a long hazel-stick, and he threw the frog as far as he could in the lake. In doing this he roused some wild ducks; a mallard and two ducks got up, and they flew toward the larger lake in a

line with an old castle; and they had not disappeared from view when Bryden came toward her, and he and she drove the cows home together that evening.

They had not met very often when she said: "James, you had better not come here so often calling to me."

"Don't you wish me to come?"

"Yes, I wish you to come well enough, but keeping company isn't the custom of the country, and I don't want to be talked about."

"Are you afraid the priest would speak against us from the altar?"

"He has spoken against keeping company, but it is not so much what the priest says, for there is no harm in talking."

"But if you're going to be married there is no harm in walking out together."

"Well, not so much, but marriages are made differently in these parts; there isn't much courting here."

And next day it was known in the village that James was going to marry Margaret Dirken.

His desire to excel the boys in dancing had caused a stir of gaiety in the parish, and for some time past there had been dancing in every house where there was a floor fit to dance upon; and if the cottager had no money to pay for a barrel of beer, James Bryden, who had money, sent him a barrel, so that Margaret might get her dance. She told him that they sometimes crossed over into another parish where the priest was not so averse to dancing, and James wondered. And next morning at Mass he wondered at their simple fervour. Some of them held their hands above their head as they prayed, and all this was very new and very old to James Bryden. But the obedience of these people to their priest surprised him. When he was a lad they had not been so obedient, or he had forgotten their obedience; and he listened in mixed anger and wonderment to the priest, who was scolding his

parishioners, speaking to them by name, saying that he had heard there was dancing going on in their homes. Worse than that, he said he had seen boys and girls loitering about the road, and the talk that went on was of one kind—love. He said that newspapers containing love stories were finding their way into the people's houses, stories about love, in which there was nothing elevating or ennobling. The people listened, accepting the priest's opinion without question. And their pathetic submission was the submission of a primitive people clinging to religious authority, and Bryden contrasted the weakness and incompetence of the people about him with the modern restlessness and cold energy of the people he left behind him.

One evening, as they were dancing, a knock came to the door, and the piper stopped playing, and the dancers whispered:

"Someone has told on us; it is the priest."

And the awe-stricken villagers crowded round the cottage fire, afraid to open the door. But the priest said that if they didn't open the door he would put his shoulder to it and force it open. Bryden went towards the door, saying he would allow no one to threaten him, priest or no priest, but Margaret caught his arm and told him that if he said anything to the priest, the priest would speak against them from the altar, and they would be shunned by the neighbours.

"I've heard of your goings on," he said—"of your beer-drinking and dancing. I'll not have it in my parish. If you want that sort of thing you had better go to America."

"If that is intended for me, sir, I'll go back to-morrow. Margaret can follow."

"It isn't the dancing, it's the drinking I'm opposed to," said the priest, turning to Bryden.

"Well, no one has drunk too much, sir," said Bryden.

" But you'll sit here drinking all night," and the priest's eyes went toward the corner where the women had gathered, and Bryden felt that the priest looked on the women as more dangerous than the porter. " It's after midnight," he said, taking out his watch.

By Bryden's watch it was only half-past eleven, and while they were arguing about the time Mrs. Scully offered Bryden's umbrella to the priest, for in his hurry to stop the dancing the priest had gone out without his; and, as if to show Bryden that he bore him no ill-will, the priest accepted the loan of the umbrella, for he was thinking of the big marriage fee that Bryden would pay him.

" I shall be badly off for the umbrella to-morrow," Bryden said, as soon as the priest was out of the house. He was going with his father-in-law to a fair. His father-in-law was learning him how to buy and sell cattle. The country was mending, and a man might become rich in Ireland if he only had a little capital. Margaret had an uncle on the other side of the lake who would give twenty pounds, and her father would give another twenty pounds. Bryden had saved two hundred pounds. Never in the village of Duncannon had a young couple begun life with so much prospect of success, and some time after Christmas was spoken of as the best time for the marriage; James Bryden said that he would not be able to get his money out of America before the spring. The delay seemed to vex him, and he seemed anxious to be married, until one day he received a letter from America, from a man who had served in the bar with him. This friend wrote to ask Bryden if he were coming back. The letter was no more than a passing wish to see Bryden again. Yet Bryden stood looking at it, and everyone wondered what could be in the letter. It seemed momentous, and they hardly believed him when he said it was from a friend who wanted to know if his health were

better. He tried to forget the letter, and he looked at the worn fields, divided by walls of loose stones, and a great longing came upon him.

The smell of the Bowery slum had come across the Atlantic, and had found him out in this western headland; and one night he awoke from a dream in which he was hurling some drunken customer through the open doors into the darkness. He had seen his friend in his white duck jacket throwing drink from glass into glass amid the din of voices and strange accents; he had heard the clang of money as it was swept into the till, and his sense sickened for the bar-room. But how should he tell Margaret Dirken that he could not marry her? She had built her life upon this marriage. He could not tell her that he would not marry her . . . yet he must go. He felt as if he were being hunted; the thought that he must tell Margaret that he could not marry her hunted him day after day as a weasel hunts a rabbit. Again and again he went to meet her with the intention of telling her that he did not love her, that their lives were not for one another, that it had all been a mistake, and that happily he had found out it was a mistake soon enough. But Margaret, as if she guessed what he was about to speak of, threw her arms about him and begged him to say he loved her, and that they would be married at once. He agreed that he loved her, and that they would be married at once. But he had not left her many minutes before the feeling came upon him that he could not marry her—that he must go away. The smell of the bar-room hunted him down. Was it for the sake of the money that he might make there that he wished to go back? No, it was not the money. What then? His eyes fell on the bleak country, on the little fields divided by bleak walls; he remembered the pathetic ignorance of the people, and it was these things that he could not endure. It was the priest who came to forbid the dancing. Yes, it was the priest. As he stood

looking at the line of the hills the bar-room seemed by him. He heard the politicians, and the excitement of politics was in his blood again. He must go away from this place—he must get back to the bar-room. Looking up, he saw the scanty orchard, and he hated the spare road that led to the village, and he hated the little hill at the top of which the village began, and he hated more than all other places the house where he was to live with Margaret Dirken—if he married her. He could see it from where he stood—by the edge of the lake, with twenty acres of pasture land about it, for the landlord had given up part of his demesne land to them.

He caught sight of Margaret, and he called her to come through the stile.

"I have just had a letter from America."

"About the money?"

"Yes, about the money. But I shall have to go over there."

He stood looking at her, wondering what to say; and she guessed that he would tell her that he must go to America before they were married.

"Do you mean, James, you will have to go at once?"

"Yes," he said, "at once. But I shall come back in time to be married in August. It will only mean delaying our marriage a month."

They walked on a little way talking, and every step he took James felt that he was a step nearer the Bowery slum. And when they came to the gate Bryden said:

"I must walk on or I shall miss the train."

"But," she said, "you are not going now—you are not going to-day?"

"Yes, this morning. It is seven miles. I shall have to hurry not to miss the train."

And then she asked him if he would ever come back.

"Yes," he said, "I am coming back."

"If you are coming back, James, why don't you let me go with you?"

"You couldn't walk fast enough. We should miss the train."

"One moment, James. Don't make me suffer; tell me the truth. You are not coming back. Your clothes—where shall I send them?"

He hurried away, hoping he would come back. He tried to think that he liked the country he was leaving, that it would be better to have a farmhouse and live there with Margaret Dirken than to serve drinks behind a counter in the Bowery. He did not think he was telling her a lie when he said he was coming back. Her offer to forward his clothes touched his heart, and at the end of the road he stood and asked himself if he should go back to her. He would miss the train if he waited another minute, and he ran on. And he would have missed the train if he had not met a car. Once he was on the car he felt himself safe—the country was already behind him. The train and the boat at Cork were mere formulæ; he was already in America.

And when the tall skyscraper stuck up beyond the harbour he felt the thrill of home that he had not found in his native village, and wondered how it was that the smell of the bar seemed more natural than the smell of fields, and the roar of crowds more welcome than the silence of the lake's edge. He entered into negotiations for the purchase of the bar-room. He took a wife, she bore him sons and daughters, the bar-room prospered, property came and went; he grew old, his wife died, he retired from business, and reached the age when a man begins to feel there are not many years in front of him, and that all he has had to do in life has been done. His children married, lonesomeness began to creep about him in the evening, and when he looked into the firelight, a vague, tender reverie floated up, and Margaret's soft eyes and

name vivified the dusk. His wife and children passed out of mind, and it seemed to him that a memory was the only real thing he possessed, and the desire to see Margaret again grew intense. But she was an old woman, she had married, maybe she was dead. Well, he would like to be buried in the village where he was born.

There is an unchanging, silent life within every man that none knows but himself, and his unchanging, silent life was his memory of Margaret Dirken. The bar-room was forgotten and all that concerned it, and the things he saw most clearly were the green hillside, and the bog lake and the rushes about it, and the greater lake in the distance, and behind it the blue line of wandering hills.

SOME PARISHIONERS

CHAP. I.

THE way before Father Maguire was plain enough, yet his uncle's apathy and constitutional infirmity of purpose seemed at times to thwart him. Only two or three days ago, he had come running down from Kilmore with the news that a baby had been born out of wedlock, and what do you think? Father Stafford had shown no desire that his curate should denounce the girl from the altar.

"The greatest saints," he said, "have been kind, and have found excuses for the sins of others."

And a few days later, when he told his uncle that the Salvationists had come to Kilmore, and that he had walked up the village street and slit their drum with a carving-knife, his uncle had not approved of his conduct, and what had especially annoyed Father Tom was that his uncle seemed to deplore the slitting of the drum in the same way as he deplored that the Kavanaghs had a barrel of porter in every Saturday, as one of those regrettable excesses to which human nature is liable. On being pressed, he agreed with his nephew that dancing and drinking were no preparation for the Sabbath, but he would not agree that evil could be suppressed by force. He even hinted that too strict a rule brought about a revolt against the rule, and when Father Tom expressed his disbelief at any revolt against the authority of the priest, Father Stafford said:

"They may just leave you, they may just go to America."

"Then you think that it is our condemnation of sin that is driving the people to America."

"My dear Tom, you told me the other day that you met a boy and girl walking along the roadside, and drove them home. You told me you were sure they were talking about things they shouldn't talk about; you have no right to assume these things. You're asking of the people an abstinence you don't practise yourself. Sometimes your friends are women."

"Yes. But——"

Father Tom's anger prevented him from finding an adequate argument, and Father Stafford pushed the tobacco-bowl towards his nephew.

"You're not smoking, Tom."

"Your point is that a certain amount of vice is inherent in human nature, and that if we raise the standard of virtuous living our people will escape from us to New York or London."

"The sexes mix freely everywhere in Western Europe; only in Ireland and Turkey is there any attempt made to separate them."

Later in the evening Father Tom insisted that the measure of responsibility was always the same.

"I should be sorry," said his uncle, "to say that those who inherit drunkenness bear the same burden of responsibility as those who come of parents who are quite sane——"

"You cannot deny, Uncle John, that free will and predestination——"

"My dear Tom, I really must go to bed. It is after midnight."

And as he walked home, Father Maguire thought of the great change he perceived in his uncle. He liked an hour's small-talk after dinner, his pipe, his glass of grog, his bed at eleven o'clock, and Father Maguire thought with sorrow of their great disputations, sometimes pro-

longed till after three o'clock. The passionate scholiast of Maynooth seemed to him unrecognizable in the esurient Vicar-General, only occasionally interested in theology, at certain hours and when he felt particularly well. The first seemed incompatible with the second, his mind not being sufficiently acute to see that after all no one can discuss theology for more than five and twenty years without wearying of the subject.

The moon was shining among the hills and the mystery of the landscape seemed to aggravate his sensibility, and he asked himself if the guardians of the people should not fling themselves into the forefront of the battle. If men came to preach heresy in his parish was he not justified in slitting their drum?

He had recourse to prayer, and he prayed for strength and for guidance. He had accepted the Church, and in the Church he saw only apathy, neglect, and bad administration on the part of his superiors. . . . He had read that great virtues are, like large sums of money, deposited in the bank, whereas humility is like the pence, always at hand, always current. Obedience to our superiors is the sure path. He could not persuade himself that it was right for him to allow the Kavanaghs to continue a dissolute life of drinking and dancing. They were the talk of the parish; and he would have spoken against them from the altar, but his uncle had advised him not to do so. Perhaps his uncle was right; he might be right regarding the Kavanaghs. In the main he disagreed with his uncle, but in this particular instance it might be well to wait and pray that matters might improve.

Father Tom believed Ned Kavanagh to be a good boy. Ned was going to marry Mary Byrne, and Father Tom had made up this marriage. The Byrnes did not care for the marriage—they were prejudiced against Ned on account of his family. But he was not going to allow them to break off the marriage. He was sure of Ned, but in

order to make quite sure he would get him to take the pledge. Next morning, when the priest had done his breakfast, the servant opened the door, and told him that Ned Kavanagh was outside, and wanted to see him.

It was a pleasure to look at this nice clean boy, with his winning smile, and the priest thought that Mary could not wish for a better husband. The priest had done his breakfast, and was about to open his newspaper, but he wanted to see Ned Kavanagh, and he told his servant to let him in. Ned's smile seemed a little fainter than usual, and his face was paler; the priest wondered, and presently Ned told the priest that he had come to confession, and, going down on his knees, he told the priest that he had been drunk last Saturday night, and that he had come to take the pledge. He would never do any good while he was at home, and one of the reasons he gave for wishing to marry Mary Byrne was his desire to leave home. The priest asked him if matters were mending, and if his sister showed any signs of wishing to be married.

"Sorra sign," said Ned.

"That's bad news you're bringing me," said the priest, and he walked up and down the room, and they talked over Kate's wilful character.

"From the beginning she didn't like living at home," said the priest.

"I wouldn't be caring about living at home," said Ned.

"But for a different reason," said the priest. "You want to leave home to get married, and have a wife and children, if God is pleased to give you children."

He sat thinking of the stories he had heard. He had heard that Kate had come back from her last situation in a cab, wrapped up in blankets, saying she was ill. On inquiry it was found that she had only been three or four days in her situation; three weeks had to be accounted for. He had questioned her himself regarding this inter-

val, but had not been able to get any clear and definite answer from her.

"She and mother do be always quarrelling about Pat Connex."

"It appears," said the priest, "that your mother went out with a jug of porter under her apron, and offered a sup of it to Pat, who was talking with Peter M'Shane, and now he is up at your cabin every Saturday."

"That's so," said Ned.

"Mrs. Connex was here the other day, and I tell you that if Pat marries your sister he will find himself cut off with a shilling."

"She's been agin us all the while," said Ned. "Her money has made her proud, but I wouldn't be blaming her. If I had the fine house she has, maybe I would be as proud as she."

"Maybe you would," said the priest. "But what I'm thinking of is your sister Kate. She'll never get Pat Connex. Pat won't ever go against his mother."

"Well, you see he comes up and plays the melodeon on Saturday night," said Ned, "and she can't stop him from doing that."

"Then you think," said the priest, "that Pat will marry your sister?"

"I don't think she is thinking about him."

"If she doesn't want to marry him, what's all this talk about?"

"She does like to be meeting Pat in the evenings and to be walking out with him, and him putting his arm around her waist and kiss her, saving your reverence's presence."

"It is strange that you should be so unlike. You come here and ask me to speak to Mary Byrne's parents for you, and that I'll do, Ned, and it will be all right. You will make a good husband, and though you were drunk last night, you have taken the pledge to-day. And I will

make a good marriage for Kate, too, if she'll listen to me."

"And who may your reverence be thinking of?"

"I'm thinking of Peter M'Shane. He gets as much as six shillings a week and his keep on Murphy's farm, and his mother has got a bit of money, and they have a nice, clean cabin. Now listen to me. There is a poultry lecture at the schoolhouse to-night. Do you think you could bring your sister with you?"

"We did use to keep a great many hins at home, and Kate had the feeding of them, and now she's turned agin them, and she wants to live in town, and she even tells Pat Connex she would not marry a farmer, however much he was worth."

"But if you tell her that Pat Connex will be at the lecture, will she come?"

"Yes, your reverence, if she believes me."

"Then do as I bid you," said the priest; "you can tell her that Pat Connex will be there."

CHAP. II.

AFTER leaving the priest Ned crossed over the road to avoid the public-house, and went for a walk on the hills. It was about five when he turned towards the village. On his way there he met his father, and Ned told him that he had been to see the priest, and that he was going to take Mary to the lecture.

"They're quarrelling at home."

Michael was very tired, and he thought it was pretty hard to come home after a long day's work to find his wife and daughter quarrelling.

"I am sorry your dinner isn't ready, father," said Kate, "but it won't be long now. I'll cut the bacon."

"I met Ned on the road," her father answered. "It's sorry I am that he has gone to fetch Mary. He's going

to take her to the lecture on poultry-keeping at the schoolhouse."

"Ah, he has been to the priest, has he?" said Kate, and her mother asked her why she said that, and the wrangle began again.

Ned was the peacemaker; there was generally quiet in the cabin when he was there. And he dropped in as Michael was finishing his dinner, bringing with him Mary, a small, fair girl, who everybody said would keep his cabin tidy. His mother and sisters were broad-shouldered women with blue-black hair and red cheeks, and it was said that he had said he would like to bring a little fair hair in the family.

"We've just looked in for a minute," said Mary. "Ned said that perhaps you'd be coming with us."

"All the boys in the village will be there to-night," said Ned. "You had better come with us." And pretending he wanted to get a coal of fire to light his pipe, Ned whispered to Kate as he passed her, "Pat Connex will be there."

She looked at the striped sunshade she had brought back from the dressmaker's—she had once been apprenticed to a dressmaker—but Ned said that a storm was blowing and she had better leave the sunshade behind.

The rain beat in their faces and the wind came sweeping down the mountain and made them stagger. Sometimes the road went straight on, sometimes it turned suddenly and went uphill. After walking for a mile they came to the schoolhouse. A number of men were waiting outside, and one of the boys told them that the priest had said they were to keep a lookout for the lecturer, and Ned said that he had better stay with them, that his lantern would be useful to show her the way. The women had collected into one corner, and the priest was walking up and down a long, smoky room, his hands thrust into the pockets of his overcoat. Now he stopped in his walk

to scold two children who were trying to light a peat fire in a tumble-down grate.

"Don't be tired, go on blowing," he said. "You are the laziest child I have seen this long while."

Ned came in and blew out his lantern, but the lady he had mistaken for the lecturer was a lady who had come to live in the neighbourhood lately, and the priest said:

"You must be very much interested in poultry, ma'am, to come out on such a night as this."

The lady stood shaking her waterproof.

"Now, then, Lizzie, run to your mother and get the lady a chair."

And when the child came back with the chair, and the lady was seated by the fire, he said:

"I'm thinking there will be no lecturer here to-night, and that it would be kind of you if you were to give the lecture yourself. You have read some books about poultry, I am sure?"

"Well, a little—but——"

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said the priest. "I'm sure the book you have read is full of instruction."

He walked up the room towards a group of men and told them they must cease talking, and coming back to the young woman he said:

"We shall be much obliged if you will say a few words about poultry. Just say what you have in your mind about the different breeds."

The young woman again protested, but the priest said:

"You will do it very nicely." And he spoke like one who is not accustomed to being disobeyed. "We will give the lecturer five minutes more."

"Is there no farmer's wife who could speak?" the young lady asked in a fluttering voice. "She'd know much more than I. I see Biddy M'Hale there. She has done very well with her poultry."

"I dare say she has," said the priest, "but the people

would pay no attention to her. She is one of themselves. It would be no amusement to them to hear her."

The young lady asked if she might have five minutes to scribble a few notes. The priest said he would wait a few minutes, but it did not matter much what she said.

"But couldn't someone dance or sing?" said the young lady.

"Dancing and singing!" said the priest. "No!"

And the young lady hurriedly scribbled a few notes about fowls for laying, fowls for fattening, regular feeding, warm houses, and something about a percentage of mineral matter. She had not half finished when the priest said:

"Now will you stand over there near the harmonium. Whom shall I announce?"

The young woman told him her name, and he led her to the harmonium and left her talking, addressing most of her instruction to Biddy M'Hale, a long, thin, pale-faced woman, with wistful eyes.

"This won't do," said the priest, interrupting the lecturer—"I'm not speaking to you, miss, but to my people. I don't see one of you taking notes, not even you, Biddy M'Hale, though you have made a fortune out of your hins. Didn't I tell you from the pulpit that you were to bring pencil and paper and write down all you heard? If you had known years ago all this young lady is going to tell you, you would be rolling in your carriages to-day."

Then the priest asked the lecturer to go on, and the lady explained that to get hens to lay about Christmas time, when eggs fetched the best price, you must bring on your pullets early.

"You must," she said, "set your eggs in January."

"You hear that," said the priest. "Is there anyone who has got anything to say about that? Why is it that you don't set your eggs in January?"

No one answered, and the lecturer went on to tell of

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the advantages that would come to the poultry-keeper whose eggs were hatched in December.

As she said this, the priest's eyes fell upon Biddy M'Hale, and, seeing that she was smiling, he asked her if there was any reason why eggs could not be hatched in the beginning of January.

"Now, Biddy, you must know all about this, and I insist on your telling us. We are here to learn."

Biddy did not answer.

"Then what were you smiling at?"

"I wasn't smiling, your reverence."

"Yes; I saw you smiling. Is it because you think there isn't a brooding hin in January?"

It had not occurred to the lecturer that hens might not be brooding so early in the year, and she waited anxiously. At last Biddy said:

"Well, your reverence, it isn't because there are no hins brooding. You'll get brooding hins at every time in the year; but, you see, you couldn't be rearing chickens earlier than March. The end of February is the earliest ever I saw. But, sure, if you could be rearing them in January, all that the young lady said would be quite right. I have nothing to say agin it. I have no fault to find with anything she says, your reverence."

"Only that it can't be done," said the priest. "Well, you ought to know, Biddy."

The villagers were laughing.

"That will do," said the priest. "I don't mind your having a bit of amusement, but you're here to learn."

And as he looked round the room, quieting the villagers into silence, his eyes fell on Kate. He looked for the others, and spied Pat Connex and Peter M'Shane near the door. "They're here, too," he thought. "When the lecture is over I will see them and bring them all together. Kate Kavanagh won't go home until she promises to

marry Peter. I have had enough of her goings on in my parish."

But Kate had caught sight of Peter. She would get no walk home with Pat that night, and she suspected her brother of having done this for a purpose and got up to go.

"I don't want anyone to leave this room," said the priest. "Kate Kavanagh, why are you going? Sit down till the lecture is over."

And as Kate had not strength to defy the priest, she sat down, and the lecturer continued for a little while longer. The priest could see that the lecturer had said nearly all she had to say, and he had begun to wonder how the evening's amusement was to be prolonged. It would not do to let the people go home until Michael Dunne had closed his public-house, and the priest looked round the audience thinking which one he might call upon to say a few words on the subject of poultry-keeping.

From one of the back rows a voice was heard: "What about the pump, your reverence?"

"Well, indeed, you may ask," said the priest.

And immediately he began to speak of the wrong they had suffered by not having a pump in the village. The fact that Almighty God had endowed Kilmore with a hundred mountain streams did not release the authorities from the obligation of supplying the village with a pump. Had not the authorities put up one in the neighbouring village?

"You should come out," he said, "and fight for your rights. You should take off your coats like men, and if you do I'll see that you get your rights," and he looked round for someone to speak.

There was a landlord among the audience, and as he was a Catholic the priest called upon him to speak. He said that he agreed with the priest in the main. They should have their pump, if they wanted a pump; if they didn't, he would suggest that they asked for something

else. Farmer Byrne said he did not want a pump, and then everyone spoke his mind, and things got mixed. The Catholic landlord regretted that Father Maguire was against allowing a poultry-yard to the patients in the lunatic asylum. If, instead of supplying a pump, the Government would sell them eggs for hatching at a low price, something might be gained. If the Government would not do this, the Government might be induced to supply books on poultry free of charge. It took the Catholic landlord half an hour to express his ideas regarding the asylum, the pump, and the duties of the Government, and in this way the priest succeeded in delaying the departure of the audience till after closing time. "However fast they walk," he said to himself, "they won't get to Michael Dunne's public-house in ten minutes, and he will be shut by then." It devolved upon him to bring the evening's amusement to a close with a few remarks, and he said:

"Now, the last words I have to say to you I'll address to the women. Now listen to me. If you pay more attention to your poultry you'll never be short of half a sovereign to lend your husbands, your sons, or your brothers."

These last words produced an approving shuffling of feet in one corner of the room, and seeing that nothing more was going to happen the villagers got up and they went out very slowly, the women curtseying and the men lifting their caps to the priest as they passed him.

He had signed to Ned and Mary that he wished to speak to them, and after he had spoken to Ned he called Kate and reminded her that he had not seen her at confession lately.

"Pat Connex and Peter M'Shane, now don't you be going. I will have a word with you presently."

And while Kate tried to find an excuse to account for her absence from confession, the priest called to Ned and Mary, who were talking at a little distance. He told them he would be waiting for them in church to-morrow,

and he said he had never made a marriage that gave him more pleasure. He alluded to the fact that they had come to him. He was responsible for this match, and he accepted the responsibility gladly. His uncle, the Vicar-General, had delegated all the work of the parish to him.

"Father Stafford," he said abruptly, "will be very glad to hear of your marriage, Kate Kavanagh."

"My marriage," said Kate. . . . "I don't think I shall ever be married."

"Now, why do you say that?" said the priest.

Kate did not know why she had said that she would never be married. However, she had to give some reason, and she said:

"I don't think, your reverence, anyone would have me."

"You are not speaking your mind," said the priest, a little sternly. "It is said that you don't want to be married, that you like courting better."

"I'd like to be married well enough."

"Those who wish to make safe, reliable marriages consult their parents and they consult the priest. I have made your brother's marriage for him. Why don't you come to me and ask me to make up a marriage for you?"

"I think a girl should make her own marriage, your reverence."

"And what way do you go about making up a marriage? Walking about the roads in the evening, and turning into public-houses, and leaving your situations. It seems to me, Kate Kavanagh, you have been a long time making up this marriage.

"Now, Pat Connex, I've got a word with you. You're a good boy, and I know you don't mean any harm by it; but I have been hearing tales about you. You've been up to Dublin with Kate Kavanagh. Your mother came up to speak to me about this matter yesterday, and she said: 'Not a penny of my money will he ever get if he marries her,' meaning the girl before you. Your mother said:

'I've got nothing to say against her, but I've got a right to choose my own daughter-in-law.' Those are your mother's very words, Pat, so you had better listen to reason. Do you hear me, Kate?"

"I hear your reverence."

"And if you hear me, what have you got to say to that?"

"He's free to go after the girl he chooses, your reverence," said Kate.

"There's been courting enough," the priest said. "If you aren't going to be married you must give up keeping company. I see Paddy Boyle outside the door. Go home with him. Do you hear what I'm saying, Pat? Go straight home, and no stopping about the roads. Just do as I bid you; go straight home to your mother."

Pat did not move at the bidding of the priest. He stood watching Kate as if he were waiting for a sign from her, but Kate did not look at him.

"Do you hear what I'm saying to you?" said the priest.

"Yes, I hear," said Pat.

"And aren't you going?" said the priest.

Everyone was afraid Pat would raise his hand against the priest, and they looked such strong men, both of them, that everyone wondered which would get the better of the other.

"You won't go home when I tell you to do so. We will see if I can't put you out of the door then."

"If you weren't a priest," said Pat, "the divil a bit of you would put me out of the door."

"If I weren't a priest I would break every bone in your body for talking to me like that. Now out you go," he said, taking him by the collar, and he put him out.

"And now, Kate Kavanagh," said the priest, coming back from the door, "you said you didn't marry because no man would have you. Peter has been waiting for you ever since you were a girl of sixteen years old, and I may

say it for him, since he doesn't say much himself, that you have nearly broken his heart."

"I'm sure I never meant it. I like Pether."

"You acted out of recklessness without knowing what you were doing."

A continual smile floated round Peter's moustache, and he looked like a man to whom rebuffs made no difference. His eyes were patient and docile; and whether it was the presence of this great and true love by her side, or whether it was the presence of the priest, Kate did not know, but a great change came over her, and she said:

"I know that Pether has been very good, that he has a liking for me. . . . If he wishes to put the ring on me——"

When Kate gave him her hand there was a mist in his eyes, and he stood trembling before her.

PATCHWORK

NEXT morning, as Father Maguire was leaving the house, his servant handed him a letter. It was from an architect who had been down to examine the walls of the church, and the envelope that Father Maguire was tearing open contained his report; two hundred pounds would be required to make the walls secure. Well, he'd see if this were so, and he continued to read the report until he arrived at the church. The wedding party was waiting, but the architect's report was much more important than a wedding, and he wandered round the old walls examining the cracks as he went. He could see they were crumbling, and he believed the architect was right. It would be better to build a new church. But to build a new church three or four thousand pounds would be required, and the architect might as well suggest that he should collect three or four millions. . . . Meanwhile, Mary Byrne and Ned Kavanagh were going to be married.

And Ned and Mary noticed the dark look between the priest's eyes as he came out of the sacristy, and Ned regretted that his reverence should be out of his humour that morning, for he had spent three out of the five pounds he had saved to pay the priest for marrying him. He had cherished hopes that the priest would understand that he had had to buy some new clothes, but the priest looked so cross that it was with difficulty he summoned courage to tell him that he had only two pounds left.

"I want two hundred pounds to make the walls of the church safe. Where's the money to come from? All the money in Kilmore goes into drink, and," he added bit-

terly, "into blue trousers. No, I won't marry you for two pounds. I won't marry you for less than five. I will marry you for nothing or I will marry you for five pounds," he added, and Ned looked round the wedding guests; he knew that none had five shillings in his pocket, and he did not dare to take the priest at his word and let him marry him for nothing.

Father Maguire felt that his temper had got the better of him, but it was too late to go back on what he said. Marry them for two pounds with the architect's letter in the pocket of his cassock! And if he was to accept two pounds, who'd pay five to be married? If he didn't stand out for his dues the marriage fee would be reduced from five pounds to one pound. . . . And if he accepted Ned's two pounds his authority would be weakened; he wouldn't be able to get them to subscribe to have the church made safe. So on the whole he thought he'd done right, and his servant was of the same opinion.

"They'd have the cassock off your back, your reverence, if they could get it."

"And the architect writing to me that the walls can't be made safe under two hundred pounds, and the whole lot of them earning not less than thirty shillings a week, and they can't pay the priest five pounds for marrying them."

In the course of the day he went to Dublin to see the architect; and next morning it occurred to him that he might have to go to America to get the money to build a new church, and as he sat thinking the door was opened, and the servant said that Biddy M'Hale wanted to see his reverence.

She came in curtseying; and before saying a word she took ten sovereigns out of her pocket and put them upon the table. The priest thought she had heard of the architect's report, and he said:

"Now, Biddy, I am glad to see you. I suppose you

have brought me this for my church. You have heard of the money it will cost to make the walls safe? "

" No, your reverence, I did not hear any more than that there were cracks in the walls."

" But you have brought me this money to have the cracks mended? "

" Well, no, your reverence. I have been thinking a long time of doing something for the church, and I thought I should like to have a window put up in the church with colours in it."

Father Maguire was touched by Biddy's desire to do something for the church, and told her her name would be put on the top of the subscription list.

" A subscription from Miss M'Hale—ten pounds."

Biddy didn't answer, and it annoyed the priest to see her sitting in his own chair stretching out her hand ready to take the money back. He could see that her wish to benefit the church was merely a pretext for the glorification of herself, and he began to argue with the old woman. But he might have spared himself the trouble of explaining that it was necessary to have a new church before you could have a window. She understood well enough it was useless to put a window up in a church that was going to fall down. But her idea still was St. Joseph in a red cloak and the Virgin in blue with a crown of gold on her head, and forgetful of everything else, she asked him whether her window in the new church should be put over the high altar, or if it should be a window lighting a side altar.

" But, my good woman, ten pounds will not pay for a window. You couldn't get anything to speak of for less than fifty pounds."

He had expected to astonish Biddy, but she did not seem astonished. She said that although fifty pounds was a great deal of money she would not mind spending all that money if she were to have her window all to her-

self. She had thought at first of only putting in part of the window, a round piece at the top, and she had thought that that could be bought for ten pounds. The priest could see that she had been thinking a good deal of this window, and she seemed to know more about it than he expected. "It is extraordinary," he said to himself, "how a desire of immortality persecutes these voteens. A desire of temporal immortality," he said, fearing he had been guilty of a heresy.

"If I could have the whole window to myself, I would give you fifty pounds, your reverence."

The priest had no idea she had saved as much money as that.

"The hins have been very good to me, your reverence, and I'd like to put up the window in the new church better than in the old church."

"But I've got no money, my good woman, to build the church."

"Ah, won't your reverence go to America and get the money? Aren't all our own people over there, and always giving money for churches?"

The priest spoke to her about statues, and suggested that perhaps a statue would be a more permanent gift, but the old woman knew that stained glass could be secured from breakage by means of wire-netting.

"Do you know, Biddy, it will require three or four thousand pounds to build a new church? If I go to America and do my best to get the money, how much will you help me with?"

"Does your reverence mean for the window?"

"No, Biddy, I was thinking of the church itself."

And Biddy said that she would give him five pounds to help to build the church and fifty pounds for her window, and, she added, "if the best gilding and paint costs a little more I would be sorry to see the church short."

"Well, you say, Biddy, you will give five pounds

towards the church. Now, let us think how much money I could get in this parish."

He had a taste for gossip, and she began by telling him she had met Kate Kavanagh on the road, and Kate had told her that there had been great dancing last night.

"But there was no wedding," said the priest.

"I only know, your reverence, what Kate Kavanagh told me. There had been great dancing last night. The supper was ordered at Michael Dunne's and the cars were ordered, and they went to Enniskerry and back."

"But Michael Dunne would not dare to serve supper to people who weren't married," said the priest.

"The supper had been ordered, and they would have to pay for it whether they ate it or not. There was a pig's head, and the cake cost eighteen shillings, and it was iced."

"Never mind the food," said the priest, "tell me what happened."

"Kate said that after coming back from Enniskerry, Michael Dunne said, 'Is this the wedding party?' and that Ned jumped off the car, and said: 'To be sure. Ain't I the wedded man?' And they had half a barrel of porther."

"Never mind the drink," said the priest, "what then?"

"There was dancing first and fighting after. Pat Connex and Peter M'Shane were both there. You know Pat plays the melodeon, and he asked Peter to sing, and Peter can't sing a bit, and he was laughed at. So he grabbed a bit of stick and hit Pat on the head, and hit him badly, too. I hear the doctor had to be sent for."

"That is always the end of their dancing and drinking," said the priest. "And what happened then, what happened? After that they went home?"

"Yes, your reverence, they went home."

"Mary Byrne went home with her own people, I suppose, and Ned went back to his home."

"I don't know, your reverence, what they did."

"Well, what else did Kate Kavanagh tell you?"

"She had just left her brother and Mary, and they were going towards the Peak. That is what Kate told me when I met her on the road."

"Mary Byrne wouldn't go to live with a man to whom she was not married. But you told me that Kate said she had just left Mary Byrne and her brother."

"Yes, they were just coming out of the cabin," said Biddy. "She passed them on the road."

"Out of whose cabin?" said the priest.

"Out of Ned's cabin. I know it must have been out of Ned's cabin, because she said she met them at the cross-roads."

He questioned the old woman, but she grew less and less explicit.

"I don't like to think this of Mary Byrne, but after so much dancing nad drinking, it is impossible to say what mightn't have happened."

"I suppose they forgot your reverence didn't marry them."

"Forgot!" said the priest. "A sin has been committed, and through my fault."

"They will come to your reverence to-morrow when they are feeling a little better."

The priest did not answer, and Biddy said:

"Am I to take away my money, or will your reverence keep it for the window?"

"The church is tumbling down, and before it is built up you want me to put up statues."

"I'd like a window better."

"I've got other things to think of now."

"Your reverence is very busy. If I had known it I wouldn't have come disturbing you. But I'll take my money with me."

"Yes, take your money," he said. "Go home quietly,

and say nothing about what you have told me. I must think over what is best to be done."

Biddy hurried away, gathering her shawl about her, and this great strong man who had taken Pat Connex by the collar and could have thrown him out of the schoolroom, fell on his knees and prayed that God might forgive him the avarice and anger that had caused him to refuse to marry Ned Kavanagh and Mary Byrne.

"Oh! my God, oh! my God," he said, "Thou knowest that it was not for myself that I wanted the money, it was to build up Thine Own House."

He remembered that his uncle had warned him again and again against the sin of anger. He had thought lightly of his uncle's counsels, and he had not practised the virtue of humility, which, as St. Teresa said, was the surest virtue to seek in this treacherous world.

"Oh, my God, give me strength to conquer anger."

The servant opened the door, but seeing the priest upon his knees, she closed it quietly, and the priest prayed that if sin had been committed he might bear the punishment.

And on rising from his knees he felt that his duty was to seek out the sinful couple. But how to speak to them of their sin? The sin was not theirs. He was the original wrongdoer. If Ned Kavanagh and Mary Byrne were to die and lose their immortal souls, how could the man who had been the cause of the loss of two immortal souls save his own? and the consequences of his refusal to marry Ned Kavanagh and Mary Byrne seemed to reach to the very ends of Eternity.

He walked to his uncle's with great swift steps, hardly seeing his parishioners as he passed them on the road.

"Is Father Stafford in?"

"Yes, your reverence."

"Uncle John, I have come to consult you."

The priest sat huddled in his armchair over the fire, and Father Maguire noticed the cassock covered with

snuff, the fringe of reddish hair about the great bald head, and the fat, inert hands. He seemed to see his uncle more clearly than he had ever seen him before, and he fell to wondering why he observed him so explicitly, his mind being intent on a matter of great spiritual importance.

"I have come to ask you," Father Tom said, "regarding the blame attaching to a priest who refuses to marry a young man and a young woman, there being no impediment of consanguinity or other."

"But have you refused to marry anyone because they couldn't pay you your dues?"

"Listen, the church is falling."

"My dear Tom, you shouldn't have refused to marry them," he said, as soon as his soul-stricken curate had laid the matter before him.

"Nothing can justify my action in refusing to marry them," said Father Tom, "nothing. Uncle John, I know that you can extenuate, that you are kind, but I don't see it is possible to look at it from any other side."

"My dear Tom, you are not sure they remained together; the only knowledge you have of the circumstances you obtained from that old woman, Biddy M'Hale, who cannot tell a story properly. An old gossip, who manufactures stories out of the slightest materials . . . but who sells excellent eggs; her eggs are always fresh. I had two this morning."

"Uncle John, I didn't come here to be laughed at."

"I am not laughing at you, my dear Tom; but really you know very little about this matter."

"I know well enough that they remained together last night. I examined the old woman carefully, and she had just met Kate Kavanagh on the road. There can be no doubt about it," he said.

"But," said Father John, "they intended to be married; the intention was there."

"Yes, but the intention is no use. We aren't living in a country where the edicts of the Council of Trent haven't been promulgated."

"That's true," said Father John. "But how can I help you? What am I to do?"

"Are you feeling well enough for a walk this morning? Could you come up to Kilmore?"

"But it is two miles—I really——"

"The walk will do you good. If you do this for me, Uncle John——"

"My dear Tom, I am, as you say, not feeling very well this morning, but——"

He looked at his nephew, and seeing that he was suffering, he said:

"I know what these scruples of conscience are; they are worse than physical suffering."

But before he decided to go with his nephew to seek the sinners out, he could not help reading him a little lecture.

"I don't feel as sure as you do that a sin has been committed; but admitting that a sin has been committed, I think you ought to admit that you set your face against the pleasure of these poor people too resolutely."

"Pleasure," said Father Tom. "Drinking and dancing, hugging and kissing each other about the lanes."

"You said dancing—now, I can see no harm in it."

"There's no harm in dancing, but it leads to harm. If they only went back with their parents after the dance, but they linger in the lanes."

"It was raining the other night, and I felt sorry, and I said, 'Well, the boys and girls will have to stop at home to-night, there will be no courting to-night.' If you don't let them walk about the lanes and make their own marriages, they marry for money. These walks at eventide represent all the aspiration that may come into

their lives. After they get married, the work of the world grinds all the poetry out of them."

"Walking under the moon," said Father Tom, "with their arms round each other's waists, sitting for hours saying stupid things to each other—that isn't my idea of poetry. The Irish find poetry in other things than sex."

"Mankind," said Father John, "is the same all the world over. The Irish aren't different from other races; do not think it. Woman represents all the poetry that the ordinary man is capable of appreciating."

"And what about ourselves?"

"We're different. We have put this interest aside. I have never regretted it, and you have not regretted it either."

"Celibacy has never been a trouble to me."

"But Tom, your own temperament should not prevent you from sympathy with others. You aren't the whole of human nature; you should try to get a little outside yourself."

"Can one ever do this?" said Father Tom.

"Well, you see what a difficulty your narrow-mindedness has brought you into."

"I know all that," said Father Tom. "It is no use insisting upon it. Will you come with me? They must be married this morning. Will you come with me? I want you to talk to them. You are kinder than I am. You sympathize with them more than I do, and it wasn't you who refused to marry them."

Father John got out of his armchair and staggered about the room on his short fat legs, trying to find his hat. Father Tom said:

"Here it is. You don't want your umbrella. There's no sign of rain."

"No," said his uncle, "but it will be very hot presently. My dear Tom, I can't walk fast."

"I am sorry, I didn't know I was walking fast."

"You are walking at the rate of four miles an hour at the least."

"I am sorry, I will walk slower."

At the cross-roads inquiry was made, and the priests were told that the cabin Ned Kavanagh had taken was the last one.

"That's just another half-mile," said Father John.

"If we don't hasten we shall be late."

"We might rest here," said Father John, "for a moment," and he leaned against a gate. "My dear Tom, it seems to me you're agitating yourself a little unnecessarily about Ned Kavanagh and his wife—I mean the girl he is going to marry."

"I am quite sure. Ned Kavanagh brought Mary back to his cabin. There can be no doubt."

"Even so," said Father John. "He may have thought he was married."

"How could he have thought he was married unless he was drunk, and that cannot be put forward as an excuse. No, my dear uncle, you are inclined for subtleties this morning."

"He may have thought he was married. Moreover, he intended to be married, and if through forgetfulness——"

"Forgetfulness!" cried Father Maguire. "A pretty large measure of forgetfulness!"

"I shouldn't say that a mortal sin has been committed: a venial one. . . . If he intended to be married——"

"Oh, my dear uncle, we shall be late, we shall be late!"

Father Stafford repressed the smile that gathered in the corner of his lips, and he remembered how Father Tom had kept him out of bed till two o'clock in the morning, talking to him about St. Thomas Aquinas.

"If they're to be married to-day we must be getting on." And Father Maguire's stride grew more impatient. "I'll walk on in front."

At last he spied a woman in a field, and she told him the married couple had gone for a walk—most of the party were with them, but Pat Connex was in bed, and the doctor had been to see him.

"I've heard," said Father Tom, "of last night's drunkenness. Half a barrel of porter; there's what remains," he said, pointing to some stains on the roadway. "They were too drunk to turn off the tap."

"I heard your reverence wouldn't marry them," the woman said.

"I am going to bring them down to the church at once."

"Well, if you do," said the woman, "you won't be a penny the poorer; you will have your money at the end of the week. And how do you do, your reverence?" The woman dropped a curtsey to Father Stafford. "It's seldom we see you up here."

"They've gone towards the Peak," said Father Tom, for he saw his uncle would take advantage of the occasion to gossip. "We shall catch them up there."

"I am afraid I am not equal to it, Tom. I'd like to do this for you, but I am afraid I am not equal to another half-mile uphill."

Father Maguire strove to hypnotize his parish priest.

"Uncle John, you're called upon to make this effort. I cannot speak to these people as I should like to."

"If you spoke to them as you would like to, you would only make matters worse," said Father John.

"Very likely, I'm not in a humour to contest these things with you. But I beseech you to come with me. Come," he said, "take my arm."

They went a few hundred yards up the road, then there was another stoppage, and Father Maguire had again to exercise his power of will, and he was so successful that the last half-mile of the road was accomplished almost without a stop.

At Michael Dunne's, the priests learned that the wedding party had been there, and Father Stafford called for a lemonade.

"Don't fail me now, Uncle John. They are within a few hundred yards of us. I couldn't meet them without you. Think of it. If they were to tell me that I had refused to marry them for two pounds, my authority would be gone for ever. I should have to leave the parish."

"My dear Tom, I would do it if I could, but I am completely exhausted."

At that moment sounds of voices were heard.

"Listen to them, Uncle John." And the curate took the glass from Father John. "They aren't as far as I thought, they are sitting under these trees. Come," he said.

And they walked some twenty yards, till they came to a spot where the light came pouring through the young leaves, and all the brown leaves of last year were spotted with light. These were light shadows amid the rocks and pleasant mosses, and the sounds of leaves and water falling, and from the top of a rock Kate listened while Peter told her they would rebuild his house.

"The priests are after us," she said.

And she gave a low whistle, and the men and boys looked round, and seeing the priests coming, they dispersed, taking several paths, and none but Ned and Mary were left behind. Ned was dozing; Mary was sitting beside him fanning herself with her hat; they had not heard Kate's whistle, and they did not see the priests until they were by them.

"Now, Tom, don't lose your head; be quiet with them."

"Will you speak to them, or shall I?" said Father Tom.

"You are too excited, and will——"

"I think you had better let me speak to them," said Father John. "You are Ned Kavanagh, and you are Mary Byrne, I believe. Now, I don't know you all, for I am getting an old man, and don't often come up this way. But notwithstanding my age, and the heat of the day, I have come up, for I've heard that you haven't acted as good Catholics should. I do not doubt for a moment that you intended to get married, but you have, I fear, been guilty of a great sin, and you've set a bad example."

"We were on our way to your reverence now," said Mary. "I mean to his reverence."

"Well," said Father Tom, "you are taking your time over it, lying here half asleep under the trees."

"We hadn't the money," Mary answered; "it wasn't our fault."

"Didn't I say I'd marry you for nothing?"

"But sure, your reverence, that's only a way of speaking."

"There's no use lingering here," said Father Tom. "You took the pledge the day before yesterday, and yesterday you were tipsy."

"Maybe I had a drop of drink in me, your reverence. Pat Connex passed me the mug of porther and I forgot myself."

"And once," said the priest, "you tasted the porter you thought you could go on taking it."

Ned did not answer, and the priests whispered together.

"We are half-way now," said Father Tom; "we can get there before twelve o'clock."

"I don't think I'm equal to it. "I really don't think—— You see it is all uphill. See how the road ascends. I couldn't manage it."

"The road is pretty flat at the top of the hill once you get to the top of the hill. You'll——"

The sound of wheels was heard, and a peasant driving a donkey-cart came up the road.

It seemed undignified to accept a lift, but his nephew's conscience was at stake, and the Vicar-General allowed himself to be helped into the donkey-cart.

"Now walk on in front of us," Father Tom said to the unmarried couple, "and step out as quickly as you can."

But no sooner were the words out of his mouth than Father Tom remembered he had caught sight of Kate standing at the top of the rock talking to Peter M'Shane: in a few days they would come to him to be married, and he hoped that Peter and Kate's marriage would make amends for this miserable patchwork, for Ned Kavanagh's and Mary Byrne's marriage was no better than patchwork.

THE WEDDING FEAST

AND everywhere Kate went her gown was being talked about—the gown she was to be married in, a grey silk that had been bought at a rummage sale. They were all at her, and so persistently that she had begun to feel she was being driven into a trap, and on the morning of her wedding turned round to ask her sister if she thought she ought to marry Peter. Julia thought it would be a pity if she didn't, for her dress would be wasted, and Kate threw a look down the skirt that boded no good.

"I hate the both of them—the priest and that old waddling sow of a mother-in-law of mine, or what is to be."

After this speech Julia expected to hear Peter's name, but Kate was not thinking of him then nor did she think of him once during the ceremony; she seemed all the time to be absent from herself; and it was not till he got up beside her on the car that she remembered they were now one flesh. But Peter did not notice that she shrank from him; nor did the others. The distribution occupied all their attention. The fat were set beside the lean, and the bridal party drove away, amid a great waving of hands and hullabalu.

And when the last car passed out of sight, Mrs. M'Shane returned home like a goose, waddling slowly, a little overcome by the thought of the happiness that awaited her son. There would be no more lonely evenings in the cabin; Kate would be with him now, and later on there would be some children, and she waddled home thinking of the cradle, and the joy it would be to her to take her grandchildren upon her knee. Passing in

at the door, she sat down, so that she might dream over her happiness a little longer. But she had not been sitting long when she had a thought of the work before her —the cabin to be cleaned from end to end, the supper to be cooked, and she did not pause in her work till the pig's head was on the table, and the sheep's tongues also; till the bread was baked and the barrel of porter rolled up in a corner. As she stood with her arms akimbo, expecting the piper every minute, thinking of the great evening it would be, she remembered that her old friend, Annie Connex, had refused to come to Peter's wedding, and that all the village was saying that Kate wouldn't have married Peter if she hadn't been driven to it by the priest and her mother.

"Poor boy!" she thought, "his heart is so set upon her that he has no ears for any word against her. And aren't people ill-natured to be talking ill of a girl on her wedding-day, and Annie Connex preventing her son from coming to the dance? If she won't come herself, she might let Pat come round for an hour." And if Annie would do this, all the gossips would have their tongues tied. Anyhow, she might try to persuade her. She locked her door and waddled up the road.

"I came round, Annie, to tell you they're married."

"Well, come in, Mary," she said, "if you have the time."

"If I have the time," Mrs. M'Shane repeated to herself as she passed into the comfortable kitchen, with sides of bacon and home-cured hams hanging from the rafters. She had not prospered like Mrs. Connex, and she knew she would never have a beautiful closed range, but an open hearth, till the end of her days. She would never have a nice dresser with a pretty carved top. The dresser in her kitchen was deal, and had no nice shining brass knobs on it. She would never have a parlour, and this parlour had in it a mahogany table and a grandfather's

clock that would show you the moon on it just the same as it was in the sky, and there was a glass over the fireplace. And this was Annie Connex's own parlour. The parlour on the other side of the house was even better furnished, for in the summer months Mrs. Connex bedded and boarded her lodgers for one pound or one pound five shillings a week.

"So she was married to-day, and Father Maguire married her after all. I never thought he would have brought her to it. Well, I'm glad she's married." It rose to Mary's lips to say, "You are glad she didn't marry your son," but she put back the words. "It comes upon me as a bit of surprise, for sure and all I could never see her settling down in the parish."

"Them that are the wildest before marriage are often the best after, and I think it will be like that with Kate."

"I hope so," said Annie. "And there is reason why it should be like that. She must have liked Peter better than we thought; you will never get me to believe that it was the priest's will or anybody's will but her own that brought Kate to do what she did."

"I hope she'll make my boy a good wife."

"I hope so, too," said Annie, and the women sat over the fire thinking it out.

Annie Connex held the Kavanagh family in abomination; they got two shillings a week off the rates, though every Saturday evening they bought a quarter barrel of porter, and Annie Connex could not believe in the future of a country that would tolerate such a thing. If her son had married a Kavanagh her life would have come to an end, and the twenty years she had worked for him would have been wasted years. Alert as a bee she sprang from her chair, for she was thinking of the work that was waiting for her as soon as she could rid herself of that bothering old slut Mary, who'd just as lief sit here all the morning talking of the Kavanaghs.

"You know Julia is doing well with her lace-making?"

"Selling it, I haven't a doubt, above its market value."

"She sells it for what she can get. Why shouldn't she?"

"And it looking like as if it was cut out of paper!"

To sell above the market value was abominable in Annie Connex's eyes. Her idea of life was order and administration. And Mary M'Shane seemed to her the very picture of the thriftless, idle village in which they lived.

"We never had anyone like Kate Kavanagh in the village before. I hear she turned round to her sister Julia, who was dressing her, and said, 'Now am I to marry him, or shall I go to America?' And she putting on her grey dress at the time."

"She looked fine in that grey dress; there was lace on the front of it, and there isn't a man in the parish that wouldn't be in Pether's place to-day if he only dared."

"I don't catch your meaning, Mary."

"Well, perhaps I oughtn't to have said it now that she's my own daughter, but I think many would have been a bit afraid of her after what she said to the priest three days ago."

"She did have her tongue on him. People are telling all ends of stories."

"'Tis said that Father Maguire was up at the Kavanaghs' three days ago, and I heard that she hunted him. She called him a policeman, and a tax-collector, and a landlord, and if she said this she said more to a priest than anyone ever said before, for there is plenty in the parish who believe he could turn them into rabbits if he liked, though I don't take it on myself to say if it be truth or lie. But I know for a fact that Patsy Rogan had promised to vote for the Unionist to please his landlord, but the priest had been to see his wife, who was going to be confined, and didn't he tell her that if Patsy

voted for the wrong man there would be horns on the new baby, and Mrs. Rogan was so frightened that she wouldn't let her husband go when he came in that night till he had promised to vote as the priest wished."

"Patsy Rogan is an ignorant man," said Annie; "there are many like him even here."

"Ah, sure there will be always some like him. Don't we like to believe the priest can do all things?"

"Anyhow she's married, and there will be an end to all the work that has been going on."

"That's true for you, Annie, and that's just what I came to talk to you about. I think now she's married we ought to give her a chance. Every girl ought to get her chance, and the way to put an end to all this talk about her will be for you to come round to the dance to-night."

"I don't know that I can do that. I am not friends with the Kavanaghs, though I always bid them the time of day when I meet them on the road."

"If you come in for a few minutes, or if Pat were to come in for a few minutes. If Pether and Pat aren't friends they'll be enemies."

"Maybe they'd be worse enemies if I don't keep Pat out of Kate's way. She's married Pether; but her mind isn't settled yet."

"Yes, Annie, I've thought of all that; but they'll be meeting on the road, and, if they aren't friends, there will be quarrelling, and some bad deed may be done."

Annie did not answer, and, thinking to convince her, Mary said:

"You wouldn't like to see a corpse right over your window."

"It ill becomes you, Mary, to speak of corpses after the blow that Pether gave Pat with his stick at Ned Kavanagh's wedding. And I must stand by my son, and keep

him out of the low Irish, and he won't be safe until I get him a good wife."

"The low Irish! Indeed, it ill becomes you, Annie, to be talking in that way of your neighbours. Is it because none of us have brass knockers on our doors? I have seen this pride growing up in you, Annie Connex, this long while. There isn't one in the village that you've any respect for, except the grocer, that black Protestant, who sits behind his counter and makes money, and knows no enjoyment in life at all."

"That's your way of looking at it; but it isn't mine. I set my face against my son marrying Kate Kavanagh, and you should have done the same."

"Something will happen to you for the cruel words you have spoken to me this day."

"Mary, you came to ask me to your son's wedding, and I had to tell you——"

"Yes, and you've told me that you won't come, and that you hate the Kavanaghs, and you've said all you could against them. I oughtn't to have listened to all you said; if I did, 'tis because we have known each other these twenty years. But don't I remember well the rags you'd on your back when you came to this village? It ill becomes——"

Annie followed her to the gate.

The sounds of wheels and hooves were heard; it was the wedding party going by, and on the first car whom should they see but Kate sitting between Pat and Peter.

"Good-bye, Annie, and good luck to you. I see that Pat's coming to our dance after all," and she could not speak for want of breath when she got to her door.

They were all there, Pat and the piper, and Kate and Peter, and all their friends: but she couldn't speak, and hadn't the strength to find the key, for she could only think of the black look that had come over Annie's face when she saw Pat sitting by Kate on the car, and Mrs.

M'Shane laughed as she searched for the key, thinking how quickly her punishment had come.

And all the while they were telling her how they had met Pat at Michael Dunne's.

"When he saw us he tried to sneak into the yard; but I went after him. And don't you think I did right?" Kate was heard to say; and as soon as they were inside she said: "Now I'll get the biggest jug of porter, and Pether shall drink one half and Pat the other."

Peter was fond of jugs, and there were large and small on the dresser: some white and brown, and some were gilt, with pink flowers.

"Now, Pether, you'll say something nice."

"I'll say, then," said Peter, "this is the happiest day of my life, as it should be, indeed: for haven't I got the girl that I wanted, and hasn't Pat forgiven me for the blow I struck him? For he knows well I wouldn't hurt a hair of his head. Weren't we boys together? But I had a cross drop in me at the time, and that was how it was."

Catching sight of Kate's black hair and rosy cheeks, which were all the world to him, he stopped speaking and stood looking at her, unheedful of everything; and at that moment he looked so good and foolish that more than one woman thought it would be a weary thing to live with him.

"Now, Pat, you must make a speech, too," said Kate.

"I haven't any speech in me," he said. "I'm glad enough to be sitting here; but I'm sore afraid my mother saw me on the car, and I think I had better be going home and letting you finish this marriage."

"What's that you're saying?" said Kate. "You won't go out of this house till you've danced a reel with me, and now sit down at the table next to me; and, Pether, you sit on the other side of him, so that he won't run away to his mother."

Her eyes were as bright as coals of fire, and she calling

to her father, who was at the end of the table, to have another slice of pig's head, and to the piper, who was having his supper in the window, to have a bit more; and then turning to Pat, who said never a word, and laughing at him for having nothing to say.

It was afterwards they remembered that Kate had seemed to put Pat out of her mind suddenly, and had stood talking to her husband, saying he must dance with her, though it was no amusement to a girl to dance opposite Peter. It was afterwards that Mary, Ned's wife, remembered how Kate, though she had danced with Peter in the first reel, had not been able to keep her eyes from the corner where Pat sat sulking, and that, sudden-like, she had grown weary of Peter. Mary remembered, too, she had seen a wild look pass in Kate's eyes, and that she had gone over to Pat and pulled him out for a dance. And why shouldn't she? for it was a pleasure for a girl to dance opposite to Pat, so cleverly did his feet move to the pipes. Everyone was admiring them when Pat cried out:

"I'm going home. I bid you all good-night here; finish this wedding as you like."

And before anyone could stop him he had run out of the house.

"Pether, go after him," Kate said; "bring him back. It would be ill luck on our wedding night for anyone to leave us like that."

Peter went out of the door, and was away some time; but he came back without Pat.

"The night is that dark, I lost him," he said.

Then Kate didn't seem to care what she said. Her black hair fell down, and she told Peter he was a fool, and that he should have run faster. And her mother said it was the porter that had been too much for her; but she said it was the priest's blessing, and this frightened everyone. But, after saying all this, she went to her

husband, saying that he was very good to her, and she had no fault to find with him. But no sooner were the words out of her mouth than her mind seemed to wander, and everyone had expected her to run out of the house. But she went into the other room instead, and shut the door behind her. Everyone knew then there would be no more dancing that night; the piper packed up his pipes, and the wedding party left Peter by the fire, who seemed to be crying like. And they were all sorry to leave him like this; and, so that he might not remember what had happened, Ned drew a big jug of porter, and put it by him.

He took a sup out of it, but seemed to forget everything, and the jug fell out of his hand.

"Never mind the pieces, Pether," his mother said. "You can't put them together; and it would be better for you not to drink any more porther. Go to your bed. There's been too much drinking this night, I'm thinking."

"Mother, I want to know why she said I didn't run fast enough after Pat. And didn't she know that if I hit Pat so hard it was because there were knobs on his stick; and didn't I pick up his stick by mistake for my own?"

"Sure, Peter, it wasn't your fault; we all know that, and Kate knows it too. Now let there be no more talking or drinking. No, Pether, you've had enough porther for to-night."

He looked round the kitchen, and seeing that Kate was not there, he said:

"She's in the other room, I think; mother, you'll be wantin' to go to your bed."

And Peter got on his feet and stumbled against the wall, and his mother had to help him towards the door.

"Is it drunk I am, mother? Will you open the door for me?"

But Mrs. M'Shane couldn't open the door, and she said:

"I think she's put a bit of stick in it."

"A bit of stick in the door? And didn't she say that she didn't want to marry me? Didn't she say something about the priest's blessing?"

And then Peter was sore afraid that he would not get sight of his wife that night, and he said:

"Won't she acquie-esh-sh?"

And Kate said:

"No, I won't."

And then he said:

"We were married in church—to-day, you acquieshed."

And she said:

"I'll not open the door to you. You're drunk, Pether, and not fit to enter a decent woman's room."

"It isn't because I've a drop too much in me that you should have fastened the door on me; it is because you're thinking of the blow I gave Pat. But, Kate, it was because I loved you so much that I struck him. Now will you open—the door?"

"No, I'll not open the door to-night," she said. "I'm tired and want to go to sleep."

And when he said he would break open the door, she said:

"You're too drunk, Pether, and sorra bit of good it will do you. I'll be no wife to you to-night, and that's as true as God's in heaven."

"Pether," said his mother, "don't trouble her to-night. There has been too much dancing and drinking."

"It's a hard thing . . . shut out of me wife's room."

"Pether, don't vex her to-night. Don't hammer her door any more."

"Didn't she acquie-esh? Mother, you have always been agin me. Didn't she acquie-esh?"

"Oh, Pether, why do you say I'm agin you?"

"Did you hear her say that I was drunk? If you tell me I'm drunk I'll say no more. I'll acquie-esh."

"Pether, you must go to sleep."

"Yes, go to sleep. . . . I want to go to sleep, but she won't open the door."

"Pether, never mind her."

"It isn't that I mind; I'm getting sleepy, but what I want to know, mother, before I go to bed, is if I'm drunk. Tell me I'm not drunk on my wedding night, and, though Kate—and I'll acquie-esh in all that may be put upon me."

He covered his face with his hands and his mother begged him not to cry. He became helpless, she put a blanket under his head and covered him with another blanket, and went up the ladder and lay down in the hay. She asked herself what had she done to deserve this trouble, and cried a great deal. And the poor, hapless old woman was asleep in the morning when Peter stumbled to his feet and found his way into the yard. As soon as he had dipped his head in a pail of water, he remembered the horses were waiting for him in the farm, and walked off to his work, staggering a little. Kate must have been watching for his going, for as soon as he was gone she drew back the bolt of the door and came into the kitchen.

"I'm going, mother," she called up to the loft.

"Wait a minute, Kate," said Mrs. M'Shane, and she was half-way down the ladder when Kate said:

"I can't wait, I'm going." And she walked up the road to her mother's—all the chairs were out in the pathway, for the rector was coming down that afternoon, and she wanted to show him how beautifully clean she kept the cabin.

"I've come, mother, to give you this," and she took the wedding ring off her finger and threw it on the ground. "I shut the door on him last night, and I'm going to

America to-day. You see how well the marriage that you and the priest made up together has turned out."

"Going to America," said Mrs. Kavanagh. "Now, is Pat going with you? and for pity sake——"

Kate stood looking at the bushes that grew between their cottage and the next one, remembering that elder-flower water is good for the complexion.

"I'm going," she said suddenly, "there's nothing more to say. Good-bye."

And her mother said, "She's going with Pat Connex." But Kate had no thought of going to America with him or of seeing him that day. But she met him at the cross-roads, out with one of his carts, and she thought he looked a nice boy; but her second thoughts were, "He's better suited to Ireland." And on this thought he and the country she had lived in always seemed to escape from her like a dream.

"I'm going to America, Pat."

"You were married yesterday."

"Yes, that was the priest's doing and mother's, and I thought they knew best. But I'm thinking one must go one's own way, and there's no judging for oneself here. That's why I'm going. You'll find some other girl, Pat."

"There's not another girl like you in the village. We're a dead and alive lot. You stood up to the priest."

"I didn't stand up to him enough. You're waiting for someone. Who are you waiting for?"

"I don't like to tell you, Kate."

She pressed him to answer her, and he told her he was waiting for the priest. His mother had said he must marry, and the priest was coming to make up a marriage for him.

"Everything's mother's."

"That's true, Pat, and you'll give a message for me. Tell my mother-in-law that I've gone."

"She'll be asking me questions, and I'll be sore set for an answer."

She looked at him steadily, but she left him without speaking, and he stood thinking.

He had had good times with her, and all such times were ended for him for ever. He was going to be married and he didn't know to whom. Suddenly he remembered he had a message to deliver, and went down to the M'Shanes' cabin.

"Ah, Mrs. M'Shane, it was a bad day for me when she married Pether. But this is a worse one, for we've both lost her."

"My poor boy will feel it sorely."

And when Peter came in for his dinner his mother said:

"Pether, she's gone, she's gone to America, and you're well rid of her."

"Don't say that, mother, I am not well rid of her, for there's no other woman in the world for me except her that's gone. Has she gone with Pat Connex?"

"No, he said something about that, and it was he who brought the message."

"I've no one to blame but myself, mother. Wasn't I drunk last night, and how could she be letting a drunken fellow like me into her bed?"

And out he went into the back-yard, and didn't his mother hear him crying there till it was time for him to go back to work?

THE WINDOW

AND it was on getting up to go to his work that he caught sight of Biddy M'Hale.

"And for what will she be coming up here at this time in the morning," he said, "but to be asking if the news is true?"

"And away he goes past me like a madman," said Biddy, as she turned into the cabin.

"Ah, well may you ask—bad work surely," said Mrs. M'Shane, "and you'll be telling the priest the true story as I'm telling it to you that the devil a bit of her would let as much as her husband's foot into her bed last night. You're on your way to him, and it would be ill-befitting the truth should remain unbeknownst to him."

"If she won't do the duties of a wife towards him, it is a fine penance for her sin that she will be getting when she goes to confession——"

"When she goes to confession! Don't ye know, then, that she took the train this morning for America and flaunted Pat Connex on the road, saying he wasn't a man at all?"

"And you'd be disgracing his reverence's ears with such a story as that! Let Pat tell it to him in his confession."

"Whether he hears it in the confession or in the daylight, isn't it the same?"

"Now it is I that am sorry to hear you speaking like a Protestant . . . no betther," she added under her breath as she hurried away.

She would have liked to have heard if Pat had danced

with Kate at the wedding, but the priest was expecting her, and she daren't keep him waiting.

"But sorra penny of my money will he be getting all the same to build the walls of his old church. He'll go to America for it and come home and build a new church with a fine spire and a big bell in it, that can be heard for miles—and then we'll see what I'll be doing for him!" And on these words her dream began again of the saints and angels she hoped she'd see one day looking down upon her, and the sun setting behind them to the great glory of God, and His Virgin Mother. And so immersed was she in her dream that she did not see the priest watching her all the while, his arms leaning over the paling that divided his strip of garden from the road.

"The stupid old woman!" he was saying to himself. "The divil a bit of her will understand that the church must come before her window."

"Sure, your reverence, there's terrible work going on in the village, and I hope I haven't been keeping your reverence waiting, for I had to stop to listen to Mrs. M'Shane, and she telling me that Kate Kavanagh that was, is gone to America after shutting the door on her husband last night because he was drunk."

"What's this you're telling me, Biddy M'Hale?"

"If your reverence will listen to me——"

"I'm listening to you. Amn't I always listening to you? Go on with your story."

At last all the facts seemed clear, and he said: "I made up this marriage so that she mightn't go away with Pat Connex."

"Well, we've been saved that," said Biddy.

"Ned Kavanagh's marriage was bad enough, but this is worse. 'Tis no marriage at all."

"Ah, your reverence, you mustn't be taking it to heart, for if the marriage didn't turn out all right it was the drink."

"Ah, the drink—the drink," said the priest, and he declared that the brewer and the distiller were the ruin of Ireland.

"That's true for you; at the same time we mustn't forget they have put up many a fine church."

A cloud came into the priest's face, for his brother was a publican and had promised a large subscription.

"Now, Biddy, what are you going to give me to make the walls safe? I don't want you all to be killed while I am away."

"There's no fear of that, your reverence; a church never fell down on anyone."

"Even so, if it falls down when nobody's in it, where are the people to hear Mass?"

"Ah, won't they be going down to hear Mass at Father Stafford's?"

"If you don't wish to give anything, say so."

"Your reverence, ain't I——?"

"We don't want to hear about that window."

And Biddy began to fear she would have to give him a few pounds to quiet him. But fortunately Pat Connex came up the road, and, turning from Biddy, the priest said:

"I hear you were dancing with Kate Kavanagh—she that went away to America this morning. Have you heard that?"

"I have, your reverence. She passed me on the road this morning."

"And you weren't thinking you might stop her?"

"Stop her!" said Pat. "Mightn't she be asking me to sin with her if I did?"

"And now your mother writes to me, Pat Connex, to ask if I will get Lennon's daughter for you."

"I see your reverence has private business with Pat Connex. I'll be going," said Biddy.

"Now, Biddy M'Hale, don't you be going!" But Biddy pretended not to hear him.

"Will I be running after her," said Pat, "and bringing her back?"

"No, let her go. If she doesn't want to help to make the walls safe I'm not going to go on my knees to her. . . . You'll have to walk to Father Stafford's to hear Mass. Have you heard your mother say what she's going to give towards the new church, Pat Connex?"

"I think she said, your reverence, she was going to send you ten pounds."

"That's very good of her." And this proof that a public and religious spirit was not yet dead in his parish softened the priest's temper, and, thinking to please him and perhaps escape a scolding, Pat began to calculate how much Biddy had saved.

"She must be worth, I'm thinking, close on one hundred pounds to-day." As the priest did not answer, he said: "I wouldn't be surprised if she was worth another fifty!"

"Hardly as much as that," said the priest.

"Hadn't her aunt the house we're living in before mother came to Kilmore, and it full of lodgers all the summer? It's true her aunt kept her working for nothing, but when she died she left her one hundred pounds, and she's been making money ever since."

"Her poultry you're thinking of," said the priest. "They're the best in the county." And the thought of Biddy's accident crossed his mind—how one day when carrying an exceptionally heavy tray she had slipped on the stairs, and for two years afterwards was on her back, everyone saying she'd never do a hand's-turn, but be looking out of the window ever afterwards. Yet it was while looking out of the window that the thought of poultry had been put into her mind; seeing the fowls pecking in the yard, she had said to herself: "Now if it be the will of

God for me to get about again, I'll see what I can do with chickens, and if I do well with them I'll do something for Him afterwards." It was herself that had dropped these words to the priest, and he remembered her eyes as she spoke them—the pathetic eyes of the hunchback. Hunchback is perhaps too strong a word, but her shoulders were higher than shoulders usually are; she was jerked forward from the waist, and by her side hung the long thin arms of the hunchback. "It was God's will," she said, "that I should mend. . . . Before my accident there wasn't a girl in the village that could keep ahead of me when we went blackberrying." A light came into her eyes. "We used to run all over the hills," was all she said; but she stood at gaze, lost in remembrances of the country underneath the hills, the plain lost in blue vapour, and on either side the blue sea spitting foam over the rocks of Braehead. "I was the only one of the girls that could keep up with the boys."

"But after her accident she was no good for anything except minding fowls." The priest threw his eye over Pat Connex and wondered if he'd ever be able to make a steady fellow of him now that Kate was out of the country; she was better in America, and by her flight made atonement in a measure for her conduct towards Peter.

"We'll go to Mrs. M'Shane. I shall want to hear her story."

"Sure, what story can she be telling of me, for didn't I run out of the house away from Kate when I saw what she was thinking of? What more could I do?"

"If Mrs. M'Shane tells the same story as you do, we'll go to your mother's, and afterwards I'll go to see Lennon about his daughter. Why, here is Ned. You've heard the news, Ned, haven't you?"

"Your reverence, I have."

And all the morning was spent between the priest and Ned Lennon, who was not inclined for the match; but at

last he made show of giving in to the priest, after reducing his daughter's dowry to about half.

"Nor would yourself be able to get me to do that much, your reverence, if Kate had remained in the country. But she's gone from us, bad cess to her. But if your reverence is going to America you may be meeting her, and 'tis a fine fistful of money she should be giving. But if you're going at once she won't be. . . . And God speed your reverence, and bring ye back safe to us with a fine lump of money for building the entire church."

"I think I shall be able to bring you back the money for the church if that woman——" His sentence did not finish: he was thinking of Biddy. But there were many other things to think of now; further negotiations for Pat's marriage, his packing, the payment of bills and a letter to the bishop, fully occupied the last three weeks.

"I'd like to stop for a minute, Pat," he said, on his way to the station.

"Well, if you do, your reverence, we shall be missing your train."

"Then go on with you!" said the priest.

The image of the old woman walking up and down telling her beads, followed by Buff Orpingtons, often rose up in his mind while he was trying to persuade a loafer to give him fifty dollars. "Now, if Biddy could be dealt with like this man!" If the loafer refused him he said: "He is another such a one as Biddy." As the money piled up he said to himself: "I am bringing Biddy back her window," and on his way from the station on his return the first person he saw was Biddy telling her beads, followed by her poultry. Much impressed by the coincidence he called to the driver to stop.

"Then how are ye, Biddy M'Hale?" he cried out.

"So you're back again, your reverence, and I hope you've been lucky in America."

"I've brought some money home, and who knows,

Biddy, but one of these days you'll be telling your beads under beautiful panes full of saints and angels?"

"Your reverence is very good to me, and God is very good," she answered, and stood looking after him, thinking how she had brought him round to her way of thinking. "And all of them singing," she said, "with harps in their hands. And to think that 'tis the birds themselves that will be bringing the window to do honour to God and Kilmore!" She began calling, "Bea-bea-beaby!" And the Buff Orpingtons and the Plymouth Rocks gathered round her. "Not a church twenty miles of Kilmore that I haven't been in. . . . Bea-bea-beaby! And they mustn't be sparing of their reds and yallers; and there must be angels with wings spread out. Bea-bea-beaby!" And when all the food was gone she put aside the basin, and began telling her beads once more.

A few days after she was at the priest's door.

"He has a gentleman with him, Miss M'Hale."

"Isn't it the architect he has with him? And haven't I need to be seeing him, since it is me that's paying for the saints and angels."

"To be sure," the priest called from his parlour "Show her in, Margaret." He drew forth his armchair for Miss M'Hale, and the architect laid his pencil aside and leaned his chin on his hand, so that he might better understand the kind of window she wished to give to her church; and encouraged by his complacency, she rambled on, an unbearable loquacity, all about herself and her neighbours.

"I think I understand," said the architect, interrupting, "and we'll do everything to meet your views, Miss M'Hale."

"Perhaps it is a little premature to discuss the window," said the priest, "but you shall choose the subjects you would like to see represented, and as for the colours, the architect and designer will advise you. I am sorry,

Biddy, this gentleman says that the four thousand pounds the Americans were good enough to give me will not do much more than build the walls."

"They're waiting for me to offer them my money, but I won't say a word," Biddy said to herself; and she sat fidgeting with her shawl, coughing from time to time, until the priest lost his patience.

"Well, Biddy, we're very busy here, and I'm sure you want to get back to your fowls. When the church is finished we'll see if we want your window."

The priest had hoped to frighten her, but her faith in her money was abundant; as long as she had her money the priest would come to her for it on one pretext or another, sooner or later; and she was as well pleased that nothing should be settled at present, for she was not quite decided whether she would like to see Christ sitting in judgment, or Christ crowning His Virgin Mother; and during the next six months she pondered on the pictures; the design and the colours grew clearer, and every morning, as soon as she had fed her chickens, she went up to Kilmore to watch the workmen.

She was up there when the first spadeful of earth was thrown up, and as soon as the walls showed above the ground she began to ask the workmen how long it would take them to reach the windows, and if a workman put down his trowel and wandered from his work, she would tell him it was God he was cheating; and later on, when the priest's money began to come to an end and he could not pay the workmen full wages, she told them they were working for God's Own House, and that He would reward them in the next world.

"Hold your tongue," said a mason. "If you want the church built why don't you give the priest the money you're saving, and let him pay us?"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, Pat Murphy.

'Tisn't for myself I am keeping it back, and isn't it all going to be spent? "

The walls were now built, and amid the clatter of the slaters' hammers Biddy began to tell the plasterers of the beautiful pictures that would be seen in her window, gabbling on and mixing up her memories of the different panes she had seen, until at last her chatter grew wearisome, and they threw bits of mortar, laughing at her for a crazy old woman, or the priest would suddenly come upon them, and they would scatter in all directions, leaving him with Biddy.

" What were they saying to you, Biddy? "

" They were saying, your reverence, that America is a great place."

" You spend a great deal of your time here, Biddy, and I suppose you are beginning to see that it takes a long time to build a church. But you're not listening to what I am saying. You are thinking about your window; but as I have often told you, you must have a house before you can have a window."

" I know that very well, your reverence; but, you see, God has given us the house."

" God's House consists of something more than walls and a roof."

" Indeed it does, your reverence; and ain't I saving up all my money for the window? "

" But, my good Biddy, there's hardly any plastering done yet. The laths have come in, and there isn't sufficient to fill that end of the church, and I've no more money."

" Won't your reverence be getting the rest of the money in America? And ain't I thinking a bazaar would be a good thing? We'd all be making scapulars, and your reverence might get medals that the Pope had blessed."

Eventually he drove her out of the church with his umbrella. But as his anger cooled he began to think that

perhaps Biddy was right—a bazaar might be a good thing, and a distribution of medals and scapulars might induce his workmen to do some overtime. He went to Dublin to talk over this matter with some pious Catholics, and an old lady wrote a cheque for fifty pounds, two or three others subscribed smaller sums, and the plasterers were busy all next week. But these subscriptions did not go nearly as far towards completing the work as he had expected. The architect had led him astray, and he looked round the vast barn that he had built, and despaired. It seemed to him it would never be finished in his lifetime. A few weeks after he was speaking to his workmen one Saturday afternoon, telling them how they could obtain a plenary indulgence by subscribing so much towards the building of the church, and by going to Confession and Communion on the first Sunday of the month. If they could not give money they could give their work. "And he would see that none would be the loser," he was saying, when Biddy suddenly appeared, and, standing in front of the men, she raised up her hands and said they should not pass by her until they had pledged themselves to come to work on Monday.

"But haven't we got wives and little ones? and we must be thinking of them."

"Ah, one can live on very little when one is doing the work of God," said Biddy.

The men called her a vain old woman, who was starving herself so that she might put up a window, and they pushed her aside and went away, repeating they had their wives and children to feed.

The priest turned upon her angrily and asked her what she meant by interfering between him and his workmen.

"Now, don't be angry with me, your reverence. I will say a prayer, and you will say a word or two in your sermon to-morrow."

And he spoke in his sermon of the disgrace it would be

to Kilmore if the church remained unfinished. The news would go over to America, and what priest would be ever able to get money there again to build a church?

"Do you think a priest likes to go about the bar-rooms asking for dollars and half-dollars? And if I have to go to America again, what answer shall I make if they cry after me down the bar: 'They don't want churches at Kilmore. If they did your workmen wouldn't have left you?' You'll be disgracing Kilmore for ever if you don't come to work; and if any of you should chance to go to America, let him not say he comes from Kilmore, for he won't be thought much of."

A murmur went up from the body of the church, the people not liking the threat, and there was great talking that night in Michael Dunne's; and everyone was agreed that it would be a disgrace to Kilmore if the church were not finished, there was no doubt about that; but no one could see that he could work for less wages than he was in the habit of getting, and as the evening wore on the question of indulgences was raised.

"The divil a bit of use going against the priest," said Ned Kavanagh, "and the indulgences will do us no harm."

"The devil a bit, but maybe a great deal of good," said Peter M'Shane, and an hour later they were staggering down the road swearing they would stand by the priest till death.

But on Monday morning nearly all were in their beds; only half a dozen came to the work, and the priest sent them all away, except one; one plasterer, he thought, could stand on the scaffold.

"If I were to fall I'd go straight to heaven," the plasterer said, and he stood so near the edge, and his knees seemed so weak under him, that Biddy thought he was going to fall.

"It would be betther for you to finish what you are doing; the Holy Virgin will be more thankful to you."

"Aye, maybe she would," he said, and he continued working on the clustered columns about the window Biddy had chosen for her stained glass, and she never taking her eyes off him. A little before twelve o'clock the priest returned, as the plasterer was going to his dinner, and he asked the plasterer if he were feeling better.

"I'm all right, your reverence, and it won't occur agin."

"I hope he won't go down to Michael Dunne's during his dinner hour," the priest said to Biddy. "If you see any further sign of drink upon him when he comes back you must tell me."

"He is safe enough, your reverence. Wasn't he telling me while your reverence was having your breakfast that if he fell down he would go straight to heaven, and opening his shirt and showing me he was wearing the scapular of the Holy Virgin?"

Biddy began to advocate a sale of scapulars.

"A sale of scapulars won't finish my church. You're all a miserly lot here, you want everything done for you."

"Weren't you telling me, your reverence, that a pious lady in Dublin——?"

"The work is at a standstill. If I were to go to America to-morrow it would be no use unless I could tell them it was progressing."

"Sure they don't ask any questions in America, they just give their money."

"If they do, that's more than you're doing at home. Come, Biddy, you've been talking long enough about what you are going to do for this church. Come, now, out with it! How much?"

"Well, now, your reverence, aren't you very hard on me? Haven't I often said I'd begin with a pound? and that much you've had from me, and——"

"You don't seem to understand, Biddy, that you can't put up your window until the plastering is finished."

"I think I understand that well enough, but the church will be finished."

"How will it be finished? When will it be finished?"

She didn't answer, and nothing was heard in the still church but her irritating little cough.

"You're very obstinate. Well, tell me where you would like to have your window."

"It is there I do be kneeling, and I'd like to see the Virgin and St. John with her. And don't you think, your reverence, we might have St. Joseph as well, with Our Lord in the Virgin's arms? And I think, your reverence, I'd like Our Lord coming down to judge us, and Him on His throne on the day of Judgment up at the top of the window."

"I can see you've been thinking a good deal about this window," the priest said.

She began again, and the priest heard the names of the different saints she would like to see in stained glass, and he let her prattle on. But his temper boiled up suddenly, and she ran away shrinking like a dog, and the priest walked up and down the unfinished church. "She tries my temper more than anyone I ever met," he said to himself. At that moment he heard some loose boards clanking, and, thinking it was the old woman coming back, he looked round, his eyes flaming. It was not Biddy, but a short and square-set man, of the type that one sees in Germany, and he introduced himself as an agent of a firm of stained-glass manufacturers. "I met an old woman on the road, and she told me that I would find you in the church considering the best place for the window she is going to put up. But she looks very poor."

"She's not as poor as she looks; she's been saving

money all her life for this window; and like people of one idea, she's apt to become a little tiresome."

"I don't quite understand."

"Well, this is the way it is," and seeing the German was interested in the old woman, he began to acquire an interest in her himself—an unpremeditated interest; for he had not suspected Biddy's mediævalism till the German said she reminded him of the quaint sculpture of Nuremberg; and talking of St. Tharagolinda, mediævalism, and Gothic art, the priest and the agent for the manufacture of stained glass in Munich walked up and down the unfinished church till the return of the plasterer to his lonely labour reminded the German that it would be well to inquire when the church would be finished. The priest hesitated, and at last decided to take the German into his confidence.

"These embarrassments always occur," said the agent, "but there is no such thing as an unfinished church in Ireland; if you were to let her put up the window subscriptions would pour in."

"How is that?"

"A paragraph in the newspaper describing the window—the gift of a local saint. I think you told me her name was M'Hale, and that she lives in the village."

"Yes, you pass her house on the way to the station."

The German took his leave abruptly, and when he was half-way down the hill he asked some children to direct him.

"Is it Biddy M'Hale, that has all the hins, that you are looking for?"

The German said that that was the woman he was seeking.

"You will see her feeding her chickens over beyant, and you must call to her over the hedge."

He did as he was bidden.

" Madam. . . . The priest has sent me to show you some designs for a stained-glass window."

No one had ever addressed Biddy as Madam before, and, very pleased, she wiped the table clean so that he could spread the designs upon it, and the first he showed her were the four Evangelists, but he said he would like a woman's present to the church to be in a somewhat lighter style, and produced a picture of St. Cecilia. As Biddy seemed doubtful, he suggested a group of figures would look handsomer than a single figure. She was fascinated by what she saw, but unable to put aside the idea of the window that had grown up in her mind, she began her relation.

At the top of the picture, where the window narrowed to a point, Our Lord must sit dressed in white on a throne, placing a golden crown on the head of the Virgin kneeling before Him, and all around the women that had loved Him; and with tears rolling over her eyelids the old woman said she was sorry she was not a nun, but perhaps God in His goodness might not think less of her; it couldn't be helped now; for as far as a mortal sin she could say truly she had never committed one. " And 'tis only them that do be dying in mortal sin that go into boiling pots." The cauldrons that Biddy wished to see them in, the agent said, would be difficult to introduce—the suffering of the souls could be more artistically indicated by flames.

" I shall have great joy," she said, " seeing the blessed women standing about Our Divine Lord, singing hymns in His praise, and the sight of sinners broiling will make me be sorrowful."

She did not notice that he was turning over his designs and referring to his notebook while she was talking. Suddenly he said:

" Excuse me, but I think we have got the greater part of the window you wish for in stock, and the rest can be

easily made up. Now the only question that remains is the question of the colours you care about."

"I've always thought there's no colour like blue. I'd like the Virgin to wear a blue cloak."

She did not know why she had chosen that colour, but the agent told her that she was quite right—that blue signified chastity; and when the German had gone she sat thinking of the Virgin in her cloak, oblivious of the cackling of the Minorcas, Buff Orpingtons, and Plymouth Rocks waiting to be fed. And while feeding them she sat, her eyes fixed on the beautiful evening sky, wondering if the blue in the picture would be as pale, or if it would be a deeper blue.

She used to wear a blue ribbon when she went blackberrying among the hills; and finding it in an old box, she tied it round her neck; and her mind was lighted up with memories of the saints and the miracles they had performed, and she went to Father Maguire to tell him of the miracle. That the agent should have in stock the very window she had imagined seemed a miracle, and she was encouraged to think some miraculous thing had happened when the priest asked her to tell him exactly what her window was like. She had often told him before, but he had never listened to her. But now he recognized her window as an adaptation of Fra Angelico's picture, and he told her how the saint had wandered from monastery to monastery painting pictures on the walls, and promised to procure a small biography of the saint for her. She received it a few days after, and as she turned over the leaves the children were out in the road coming home from school; and taking it out to them, they read bits of it aloud, for her sight was failing. She frightened them by dropping on her knees and crying out that God had been very good to her. Soon after she took to wandering over the country visiting churches, returning to Kilmore suddenly. She was seen as usual at sunrise and at sunset

feeding her poultry, and then she went away again, and the next time she was heard of was in a church near Dublin celebrated for its stained glass. A few days after Ned Kavanagh met her hurrying up the road from the station, and she told him she had just received a letter from the Munich agent saying he had forwarded her window.

It was to arrive to-morrow some time about midday, but Biddy's patience was exhausted long before, and she walked a great part of the way to Dublin, returning with the dray, walking with the draymen till within three miles of Kilmore, when she was so tired that she could walk no longer; they put her on the top of the boxes, and a cheer went up from the villagers when she was lifted down. As soon as she reached the ground she called to the workmen to be careful in unpacking the glass; and when they were putting the window in she went down on her knees and prayed that no accident might happen.

At sunset the church had to be closed, and it was with difficulty she was persuaded to leave it. Next morning at sunrise she was knocking at the door of the woman who was charged with the cleaning of the church, asking for the key; and from that day she was hardly ever out of the church, preventing the charwoman from getting on with her work, saying she would show her things in the window she had not seen before. One day, as the priest and the charwoman were talking, Biddy came in. She seemed a little astray, a little exalted, and Father Maguire watched her as she knelt with uplifted face, telling her beads. He noticed that she held the same bead a long time between her fingers. Minutes passed, but her lips did not move; and her look was so enraptured that he began to wonder if Paradise were being revealed to her.

And while the priest wondered, Biddy listened to music inconceivably tender. She had been awakened from her

prayers by the sound of a harp-string touched very gently; the note floated down the aisle, and all the vibrations were not dead when the same note was repeated. Biddy listened, anxious to hear it a third time. Once more she heard it, and the third time she saw the saint's fingers moving over the strings; she played a little tune of six notes. And it was at the end of the second playing of the tune that the priest touched Biddy on the shoulder. She looked up and it was a long while before she saw him, and she was greatly grieved that she had been awakened from her dream. It was the priest that said it was a dream, not she; though he was a priest, she couldn't believe he was right in this, and looking at him, she wondered what would have happened if he had not awakened her.

Next day was Sunday, and she was in the church at sunrise listening for the music. But she heard and saw nothing until the priest had reached the middle of the Mass. The acolyte had rung the bell to prepare the people for the Elevation, and it was then that she heard the faint low sound that the light wire emitted when the saint touched her harp, and she noticed that it was the same saint that had played yesterday, the tall saint with the long fair hair who stood apart from the others, looking more intently at Our Blessed Lord than the others. The saint touched her harp again and the note vibrated for a long while, and when the last vibrations died she touched the string again. The note was sweet and languid and intense, and it pierced to the very core of Biddy. The saint's hand passed over the strings, producing faint, exquisite sounds, so faint that Biddy felt no surprise they were not heard by anyone else; it was only by listening intently that she could hear them. Yesterday's little tune appeared again, a little tune of six notes, and it seemed to Biddy even more exquisite than it had seemed when she first heard it. The only difference be-

tween to-day and yesterday was, that to-day all the saints struck their harps, and after playing for some time the music grew white like snow and remote as star-fire, and yet Biddy heard it more clearly than she had heard anything before, and she saw Our Lord more clearly than she had ever seen anybody else. She saw Him look up when He had placed the crown on His mother's head; she heard Him sing a few notes, and then the saints began to sing. Biddy was lifted into their heavenly life, and among them she was beautiful and clad in shining garments. She praised God with them, and when the priest raised the host, Biddy saw Our Lord look at her, and His eyes brightened as if with love of her. He seemed to have forgotten the saints that sang His praises so beautifully, and when He bent towards her and she felt His presence about her, she cried out: "He is coming to take me in His arms!" and fell out of her place, pale as a dead woman. The clerk went to her, but she lay rigid as one who had been dead a long while.

"He is coming to put the gold crown on my head," she cried, and swooned again.

It was a long time before she seemed conscious of those around her. She was carried to the porch and sprinkled with holy water, and little by little she regained consciousness; she was helped to her feet, and tottered out of the church and followed the road without seeing it or the people whom she met on the road. At last a woman took her by the arm and led her into her cabin and spoke to her. She could not answer at first, but she awoke gradually, and began to remember that she had heard music in the window and that Our Lord had been very good to her. The neighbour left her babbling. She began to feed her chickens, and was glad when she had fed them, for she wanted to think of all the great and wonderful sights she had seen. Her craving for ecstasy grew more intense; and striving to forget her poor cabin she

placed her thought in her window and waited for Sunday to come round again. The priest's mutterings were indifferent to her; tremulous and expectant, she knelt, and the signal was the same as before. The note from the harp-string floated down the aisles, and when it had been repeated three times the saintly fingers moved over the strings, and she heard the beautiful little tune.

Every eye was upon her, and forgetful of the fact that the priest was celebrating Mass, they said, "Look, she hears the saints singing about her. She sees Christ coming." The priest heard Biddy cry out "Christ is coming," and she fell prone and none dared to raise her up, and she lay there till the Mass was finished. When the priest left the altar she was still lying at length, and the people were about her; and knowing how much she would feel the slightest reproof, he did not say a word that would throw doubt on her statement. He did not like to impugn a popular belief, but he felt himself obliged to exercise clerical control.

"Now, Biddy, I know you to be a pious woman, but I cannot allow you to interrupt the Mass."

"If the Lord comes to me ain't I to receive Him, your reverence?"

"In the first place I object to your dress; you are not properly dressed."

She wore a bright blue cloak—she seemed to wear hardly anything else, and tresses of dirty hair hung over her shoulders.

"The Lord has not said anything to me about my dress, your reverence, and He put His gold crown on my head to-day."

"Biddy, is all this true?"

"As true as you're standing there."

"I'm not asking if your visions are true: I have my opinion about that. I'm asking if they are true to you."

"True to me, your reverence? I don't rightly understand."

"I want to know if you think Our Lord put a gold crown on your head to-day."

"To be sure He did, your reverence."

"If He did, where is it?"

"Where is it, your reverence? It is with Him, to be sure. He wouldn't be leaving it on my head and me walking about the parish—that wouldn't be reasonable at all, I'm thinking. He doesn't want me to be robbed."

"There is no one in the parish who'd rob you."

"Maybe someone would come out of another parish, if I had a gold crown on my head. And such a crown as He put upon it!—I'm sorry you didn't see it, but your reverence was saying the holy Mass at the time."

And she fell on her knees and clung to his cassock.

"And you saw the crown, Biddy?"

"I had it on my head, your reverence."

"And you heard the saints singing?"

"Yes, and I'll tell you what they were singing," and she began crooning. "Something like that, your reverence. You don't believe me, but we have only our ears and our eyes to guide us."

"I don't say I don't believe you, Biddy, but you may be deceived."

"Sorra deceiving, your reverence, or I've been deceived all my life. And now, your reverence, if you've no more business with me I will go, for they do be waiting in the chapel yard to hear me tell them about the crown that was put upon my head."

"Well, Biddy, I want you to understand that I cannot have you interrupting the Mass. I cannot permit it. The visions may be true, or not true, but you must not interrupt the Mass."

The acolyte opened the door of the sacristy, Biddy slipped through, and the priest took off his cassock. As

he did so, he noticed that the acolyte's eyes were at the window watching, and when the priest looked he saw the people gathering about Biddy, and when he came out of the sacristy no one noticed him; everyone was listening to Biddy.

"She's out of her mind," he said. "She's as good as mad. What did she tell me—that Our Lord put a crown on her head?"

One parishioner withdrew without answering. Another went away saying, "Well, I suppose your reverence knows best." He heard another say, "Well, after all, doesn't she hear the saints singing?"

And next day there were people from Dublin asking after Biddy, and Father Maguire had to send for her, though he feared all the honour that was being shown to her would turn her head and lead her into further extravagances. On the other hand, subscriptions were coming in and he could not close his mind to the fact that it was Biddy who enabled him to furnish his church with varnished pews and holy pictures. He received two fine statues of Our Lady and St. Joseph in different coloured cloaks—St. Joseph in a purple, Our Lady in a blue, and there were gold stars on it. He placed these two statues on the two side altars, and fell to thinking of the many things he wanted and that he could get through Biddy. For the sake of these things he must let her remain in Kilmore; but she could not be allowed to interrupt the Mass, and he must be allowed to pass in and out of his church without extravagant salutation.

Now he was going home to his breakfast, and a young man extremely interested in ecclesiastical art was coming to breakfast with him; and as soon as they entered the church they would be accosted by this old woman, who would follow them about asking them to look at her window, telling them her visions, which might or might not be true. She had a knack of hiding herself—he often

came upon her suddenly behind the pillars, and sometimes he found her in the confessional. "Now, shall I tell him about Biddy or shall I take my chance that she may not be in the church this morning?" He remembered that the young man was very learned in Walter Pater and Chartres Cathedral, and Father Maguire feared he would cut a poor figure in the discussion, for he could not fix his attention; he could think only of Biddy, and when he and his visitor walked down to the new church he thought he had done well to keep his own counsel. He could not see the old woman anywhere; his fears subsided, and he called the young man's attention to the altar that had been specially designed for his church. The young man was interested in it, and had begun to tell the priest of the altars he had seen in Italy, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder suddenly.

"Your honour will be well rewarded if you'll come to my window. Now why should I be telling him a lie, your reverence?"

She threw herself at the priest's feet and besought him to believe that the saints had been with her, and that every word she was speaking was the truth.

"Biddy, if you don't go away at once, I'll not allow you inside the church to-morrow."

The young man looked at the priest, surprised at his sternness, and the priest said:

"She has become a great trial to us at Kilmore. Come aside and I'll tell you about her."

And when the priest had told the young man about the window the young man asked if Biddy would have to be sent away.

"I hope not, for if she were separated from her window she would certainly die. It came out of her savings, out of the money she made out of chickens."

"And what has become of the chickens?"

"She has forgotten all about them, and they've wan-

dered away or died. She has been evicted, and lives now in an outhouse on the bits of bread and the potatoes the neighbours give her. The things of this world are no longer realities to her. Her realities are what she sees and hears in that window. Last night she told me a saint knocked at her door. I don't like to encourage her to talk, but if you would like to hear her—Biddy, come here!"

The old woman came back as a dog comes to its master, joyful, and with brightening eyes.

"Tell us what you saw last night."

"Well, your reverence, I was asleep, and there suddenly came a knocking at the door, and I got up, and then I heard a voice saying, 'Open the door.' A beautiful young man was outside, his hair was yellow and curly, and he was dressed in white. He came into the room first, and he was followed by other saints, and they all had harps in their hands, and they sang for a long while. Come to the window, and you will hear it for yourselves. Someone is always singing it in the window, but not always as clearly as they did last night."

"We'll go to see your window presently."

The old woman crept back to her place, and the priest and the young man began to talk about the possibilities of miracles in modern times; and they talked on, until the sudden sight of Biddy gave them pause.

"Look at her," said the young man. "Can you doubt that she sees heaven quite plainly, and that the saints visited her just as she told us?"

"No doubt, no doubt. But she's a great trial to us at Mass. . . . The Mass mustn't be interrupted."

"I suppose even miracles are inconvenient at times, Father Maguire. Be patient with her: let her enjoy her happiness."

And the two men stood looking at her, trying vainly to imagine what her happiness might be.

A LETTER TO ROME

ONE morning the priest's housekeeper mentioned, as she gathered up the breakfast things, that Mike Mulhare had refused to let his daughter Catherine marry James Murdoch until he had earned the price of a pig.

"This is bad news," said the priest, and he laid down the newspaper.

"And he waiting for her all the summer! Wasn't it in February last that he came out of the poorhouse? And the fine cabin he has built for her! He'll be so lonesome in it that he'll be going——"

"To America!" said the priest.

"Maybe it will be going back to the poorhouse he'll be, for he'll never earn the price of his passage at the relief works."

The priest looked at her for a moment as if he did not catch her meaning. A knock came at the door, and he said:

"The inspector is here, and there are people waiting for me." And while he was distributing the clothes he had received from Manchester, he argued with the inspector as to the direction the new road should take; and when he came back from the relief works, his dinner was waiting. He was busy writing letters all the afternoon; and it was not until he had handed them to the postmistress that he was free to go to poor James Murdoch, who had built a cabin at the end of one of the famine roads in a hollow out of the way of the wind.

From a long way off the priest could see him digging his patch of bog.

And when he caught sight of the priest he stuck his

spade in the ground and came to meet him, almost as naked as an animal, bare feet protruding from ragged trousers; there was a shirt, but it was buttonless, and the breast-hair trembled in the wind—a likely creature to come out of the hovel behind him.

"It has been dry enough," he said, "all the summer; and I had a thought to make a drain. But 'tis hard luck, your reverence, and after building this house for her. There's a bit of smoke in the house now, but if I got Catherine I wouldn't be long making a chimney. I told Mike he should give Catherine a pig for her fortune, but he said he would give her a calf when I bought the pig, and I said, 'Haven't I built a fine house, and wouldn't it be a fine one to rear him in?'"

And together they walked through the bog, James talking to the priest all the way, for it was seldom he had anyone to talk to.

"Now I mustn't take you any further from your digging."

"Sure there's time enough," said James. "Amn't I there all day?"

"I'll go and see Mike Mulhare myself," said the priest.

"Long life to your reverence."

"And I will try to get you the price of the pig."

"Ah, 'tis your reverence that's good to us."

The priest stood looking after him, wondering if he would give up life as a bad job and go back to the poor-house; and while thinking of James Murdoch he became conscious that the time was coming for the priests to save Ireland. Catholic Ireland was passing away; in five-and-twenty years Ireland would be a Protestant country if—(he hardly dared to formulate the thought)—if the priests did not marry. The Greek priests had been allowed to retain their wives in order to avert a schism. Rome had always known how to adapt herself to circumstances; there was no doubt that if Rome knew Ireland's

need of children she would consider the revocation of the decree of celibacy, and he returned home remembering that celibacy had only been made obligatory in Ireland in the twelfth century.

Ireland was becoming a Protestant country! He drank his tea mechanically, and it was a long time before he took up his knitting. But he could not knit, and laid the stocking aside. Of what good would his letter be? A letter from a poor parish priest asking that one of the most ancient decrees should be revoked! It would be thrown into the waste-paper basket. The cardinals are men whose thoughts move up and down certain narrow ways, clever men no doubt, but clever men are often the dupes of conventions. All men who live in the world accept the conventions as truths. It is only in the wilderness that the truth is revealed to man. "I must write the letter! Instinct," he said, "is a surer guide than logic, and my letter to Rome was a sudden revelation."

As he sat knitting by his own fireside his idea seemed to come out of the corners of the room. "When you were at Rathowen," his idea said, "you heard the clergy lament that the people were leaving the country. You heard the bishop and many eloquent men speak on the subject. Words, words, but on the bog road the remedy was revealed to you.

"That if each priest were to take a wife about four thousand children would be born within the year, forty thousand children would be added to the birth-rate in ten years. Ireland can be saved by her priesthood!"

The truth of this estimate seemed beyond question, and yet, Father MacTurnan found it difficult to reconcile himself to the idea of a married clergy. "One is always the dupe of prejudice," he said to himself and went on thinking. "The priests live in the best houses, eat the best food, wear the best clothes; they are indeed the flower of the nation, and would produce magnificent sons

and daughters. And who could bring up their children according to the teaching of our holy church as well as priests? "

So did his idea unfold itself, and very soon he realized that other advantages would accrue, beyond the addition of forty thousand children to the birth-rate, and one advantage that seemed to him to exceed the original advantage would be the nationalization of religion, the formation of an Irish Catholicism suited to the ideas and needs of the Irish people.

In the beginning of the century the Irish lost their language, in the middle of the century the characteristic aspects of their religion. It was Cardinal Cullen who had denationalized religion in Ireland. But everyone recognized his mistake. How could a church be nationalized better than by the rescission of the decree of celibacy? The begetting of children would attach the priests to the soil of Ireland; and it could not be said that anyone loved his country who did not contribute to its maintenance. The priests leave Ireland on foreign missions, and every Catholic who leaves Ireland, he said, helps to bring about the very thing that Ireland has been struggling against for centuries—Protestantism.

His idea talked to him every evening, and, one evening, it said, " Religion, like everything else, must be national," and it led him to contrast cosmopolitanism with parochialism. " Religion, like art, came out of parishes," he said. He felt a great force to be behind him. He must write! He must write. . . .

He dropped the ink over the table and over the paper, he jotted down his ideas in the first words that came to him until midnight; and when he slept his letter floated through his sleep.

" I must have a clear copy of it before I begin the Latin translation."

He had written the English text thinking of the Latin

that would come after, very conscious of the fact that he had written no Latin since he had left Maynooth, and that a bad translation would discredit his ideas in the eyes of the Pope's secretary, who was doubtless a great Latin scholar.

"The Irish priests have always been good Latinists," he murmured, as he hunted through the dictionary.

The table was littered with books, for he had found it necessary to create a Latin atmosphere, and one morning he finished his translation and walked to the whitening window to rest his eyes before reading it over. But he was too tired to do any more, and he laid his manuscript on the table by his bedside.

"This is very poor Latin," he said to himself some hours later, and the manuscript lay on the floor while he dressed. It was his servant who brought it to him when he had finished his breakfast, and, taking it from her, he looked at it again.

"It is as tasteless," he said, "as the gruel that poor James Murdoch is eating." He picked up *St. Augustine's Confessions.* "Here is idiom," he muttered, and he continued reading till he was interrupted by the wheels of a car stopping at his door. It was Meehan! None had written such good Latin at Maynooth as Meehan.

"My dear Meehan, this is indeed a pleasant surprise."

"I thought I'd like to see you. I drove over. But—I am not disturbing you. . . . You've taken to reading again. St. Augustine! And you're writing in Latin!"

Father James's face grew red, and he took the manuscript out of his friend's hand.

"No, you mustn't look at that."

And then the temptation to ask him to overlook certain passages made him change his mind.

"I was never much of a Latin scholar."

"And you want me to overlook your Latin for you. But why are you writing Latin?"

"Because I am writing to the Pope. I was at first a little doubtful, but the more I thought of this letter the more necessary it seemed to me."

"And what are you writing to the Pope about?"

"You see Ireland is going to become a Protestant country."

"Is it?" said Father Meehan, and he listened a little while. Then, interrupting his friend, he said:

"I've heard enough. Now, I strongly advise you not to send this letter. We have known each other all our lives. Now, my dear MacTurnan——"

Father Michael talked eagerly, and Father MacTurnan sat listening. At last Father Meehan saw that his arguments were producing no effect, and he said:

"You don't agree with me."

"It isn't that I don't agree with you. You have spoken admirably from your point of view, but our points of view are different."

"Take your papers away, burn them!"

Then, thinking his words were harsh, he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and said:

"My dear MacTurnan, I beg of you not to send this letter."

Father James did not answer; the silence grew painful, and Father Michael asked Father James to show him the relief works that the Government had ordered.

But important as these works were, the letter to Rome seemed more important to Father Michael, and he said:

"My good friend, there isn't a girl that would marry us; now is there? There isn't a girl in Ireland who would touch us with a forty-foot pole. Would you have the Pope release the nuns from their vows?"

"I think exceptions should be made in favour of those in Orders. But I think it would be for the good of Ireland if the secular clergy were married."

"That's not my point. My point is that even if the

decree were rescinded we shouldn't be able to get wives. You've been living too long in the waste, my dear friend. You've lost yourself in dreams. We shouldn't get a penny. 'Why should we support that fellow and his family?' is what they'd be saying."

"We should be poor, no doubt," said Father James. "But not so poor as our parishioners. My parishioners eat yellow meal, and I eat eggs and live in a good house."

"We are educated men, and should live in better houses than our parishioners."

"The greatest saints lived in deserts."

And so the argument went on until the time came to say good-bye, and then Father James said:

"I shall be glad if you will give me a lift on your car. I want to go to the post-office."

"To post your letter?"

"The idea came to me—it came swiftly like a lightning-flash, and I can't believe that it was an accident. If it had fallen into your mind with the suddenness that it fell into mine, you would believe that it was an inspiration."

"It would take a good deal to make me believe I was inspired," said Father Michael, and he watched Father James go into the post-office to register his letter.

At that hour a long string of peasants returning from their work went by. The last was Norah Flynn, and the priest blushed deeply for it was the first time he had looked on one of his parishioners in the light of a possible spouse; and he entered his house frightened; and when he looked round his parlour he asked himself if the day would come when he should see Norah Flynn sitting opposite to him in his armchair. His face flushed deeper when he looked towards the bedroom door, and he fell on his knees and prayed that God's will might be made known to him.

During the night he awoke many times, and the dream

that had awakened him continued when he had left his bed, and he wandered round and round the room in the darkness, seeking a way. At last he reached the window and drew the curtain, and saw the dim dawn opening out over the bog.

"Thank God," he said, "it was only a dream—only a dream."

And lying down he fell asleep, but immediately another dream as horrible as the first appeared, and his housekeeper heard him beating on the walls.

"Only a dream, only a dream," he said.

He lay awake, not daring to sleep lest he might dream. And it was about seven o'clock when he heard his housekeeper telling him that the inspector had come to tell him they must decide what direction the new road should take. In the inspector's opinion it should run parallel with the old road. To continue the old road two miles further would involve extra labour; the people would have to go further to their work, and the stones would have to be drawn further. The priest held that the extra labour was of secondary importance. He said that to make two roads running parallel with each other would be a wanton humiliation to the people.

But the inspector could not appreciate the priest's arguments. He held that the people were thinking only how they might earn enough money to fill their bellies.

"I don't agree with you, I don't agree with you," said the priest. "Better go in the opposite direction and make a road to the sea."

"You see, your reverence, the Government don't wish to engage upon any work that will benefit any special class. These are my instructions."

"A road to the sea will benefit no one. . . . I see you are thinking of the landlord. But there isn't a harbour; no boat ever comes into that flat, waste sea."

"Well, your reverence, one of these days a harbour

may be made. An arch would look well in the middle of the bog, and the people wouldn't have to go far to their work."

"No, no. A road to the sea will be quite useless; but its futility will not be apparent—at least, not so apparent—and the people's hearts won't be broken."

The inspector seemed a little doubtful, but the priest assured him that the futility of the road would satisfy English ministers.

"And yet these English ministers," the priest reflected, "are not stupid men; they're merely men blinded by theory and prejudice, as all men are who live in the world. Their folly will be apparent to the next generation, and so on and so on for ever and ever, world without end."

"And the worst of it is," the priest said, "while the people are earning their living on these roads, their fields will be lying idle, and there will be no crops next year."

"We can't help that," the inspector answered, and Father MacTurnan began to think of the cardinals and the transaction of business in the Vatican; cardinals and ministers alike are the dupes of convention. Only those who are estranged from habits and customs can think straightforwardly.

"If, instead of insisting on these absurd roads, the Government would give me the money, I'd be able to feed the people at a cost of about a penny a day, and they'd be able to sow their potatoes. And if only the cardinals would consider the rescission of the decree on its merits, Ireland would be saved from Protestantism."

Some cardinal was preparing an answer—an answer might be even in the post. Rome might not think his letter worthy of an answer.

A few days afterwards the inspector called to show him a letter he had just received from the Board of

Works. Father James had to go to Dublin, and in the excitement of these philanthropic activities the emigration question was forgotten. Six weeks must have gone by when the postman handed him a letter.

"This is a letter from Father Moran," he said to the inspector who was with him at the time. "The Bishop wishes to see me. We will continue the conversation to-morrow. It is eight miles to Rathowen, and how much further is the Palace?"

"A good seven," said the inspector. "You're not going to walk it, your reverence?"

"Why not? In four hours I shall be there." He looked at his boots first, and hoped they would hold together; and then he looked at the sky, and hoped it would not rain.

There was no likelihood of rain; no rain would fall to-day out of that soft dove-coloured sky full of sun; ravishing little breezes lifted the long heather, the rose-coloured hair of the knolls, and over the cutaway bog wild white cotton was blowing. Now and then a yellow-hammer rose out of the coarse grass and flew in front of the priest, and once a pair of grouse left the sunny hillside where they were nesting with a great whirr; they did not go far, but alighted in a hollow, and the priest could see their heads above the heather watching him.

"The moment I'm gone they'll return to their nest."

He walked on, and when he had walked six miles he sat down and took a piece of bread out of his pocket. As he ate it his eyes wandered over the undulating bog, brown and rose, marked here and there by a black streak where the peasants had been cutting turf. The sky changed very little; it was still a pale, dove colour; now and then a little blue showed through the grey, and sometimes the light lessened; but a few minutes after

the sunlight fluttered out of the sky again and dozed among the heather.

"I must be getting on," he said, and he looked into the brown water, fearing he would find none other to slake his thirst. But just as he stooped he caught sight of a woman driving an ass who had come to the bog for turf, and she told him where he would find a spring, and he thought he had never drunk anything so sweet as this water.

"I've got a good long way to go yet," he said, and he walked studying the lines of the mountains, thinking he could distinguish one hill from the other; and that in another mile or two he would be out of the bog. The road ascended, and on the other side there were a few pines. Some hundred yards further on there was a green sod. But the heather appeared again, and he had walked ten miles before he was clear of whins and heather.

As he walked he thought of his interview with the Bishop, and was nearly at the end of his journey when he stopped at a cabin to mend his shoe. And while the woman was looking for a needle and thread, he mopped his face with a great red handkerchief that he kept in the pocket of his threadbare coat—a coat that had once been black, but had grown green with age and weather. He had outwalked himself, and would not be able to answer the points that the Bishop would raise. The woman found him a scrap of leather, and it took him an hour to patch his shoe under the hawthorn tree.

He was still two miles from the Palace, and arrived footsore, covered with dust, and so tired that he could hardly rise from the chair to receive Father Moran when he came into the parlour.

"You seem to have walked a long way, Father MacTurnan."

"I shall be all right presently. I suppose his Grace doesn't want to see me at once."

"Well, that's just it. His Grace sent me to say he would see you at once. He expected you earlier."

"I started the moment I received his Grace's letter. I suppose his Grace wishes to see me regarding my letter to Rome."

The secretary hesitated, coughed, and went out, and Father MacTurnan wondered why Father Moran looked at him so intently. He returned in a few minutes, saying that his Grace was sorry that Father MacTurnan had had so long a walk, and he hoped he would rest awhile and partake of some refreshment. . . . The servant brought in some wine and sandwiches, and the secretary returned in half an hour. His Grace was now ready to receive him. . . .

Father Moran opened the library door, and Father MacTurnan saw the Bishop—a short, alert man, about fifty-five, with a sharp nose and grey eyes and bushy eyebrows. He popped about the room giving his secretary many orders, and Father MacTurnan wondered if the Bishop would ever finish talking to his secretary. He seemed to have finished, but a thought suddenly struck him, and he followed his secretary to the door, and Father MacTurnan began to fear that the Pope had not decided to place the Irish clergy on the same footing as the Greek. If he had, the Bishop's interest in these many various matters would have subsided: his mind would be engrossed by the larger issue.

As he returned from the door his Grace passed Father MacTurnan without speaking to him, and going to his writing-table he began to search amid his papers. At last Father MacTurnan said:

"Maybe your Grace is looking for my letter to Rome?"

"Yes," said his Grace, "do you see it?"

"It's under your Grace's hand, those blue papers."

"Ah, yes," and his Grace leaned back in his arm-chair, leaving Father MacTurnan standing.

"Won't you sit down, Father MacTurnan?" he said casually. "You've been writing to Rome, I see, advocating the revocation of the decree of celibacy. There's no doubt the emigration of Catholics is a very serious question. So far you have got the sympathy of Rome, and I may say of myself; but am I to understand that it was your fear for the religious safety of Ireland that prompted you to write this letter?"

"What other reason could there be?"

Nothing was said for a long while, and then the Bishop's meaning began to break in on his mind; his face flushed, and he grew confused.

"I hope your Grace doesn't think for a moment that——"

"I only want to know if there is anyone—if your eyes ever went in a certain direction, if your thoughts ever said, 'Well, if the decree were revoked——'"

"No, your Grace, no. Celibacy has been no burden to me—far from it. Sometimes I feared that it was celibacy that attracted me to the priesthood. Celibacy was a gratification rather than a sacrifice."

"I am glad," said the Bishop, and he spoke slowly and emphatically, "that this letter was prompted by such impersonal motives."

"Surely, your Grace, His Holiness didn't suspect——"

The Bishop murmured an euphonious Italian name, and Father MacTurnan understood that he was speaking of one of the Pope's secretaries.

"More than once," said Father MacTurnan, "I feared if the decree were revoked, I shouldn't have had sufficient courage to comply with it."

And then he told the Bishop how he had met Norah Flynn on the road. An amused expression stole into the Bishop's face, and his voice changed.

"I presume you do not contemplate making marriage

obligatory; you do not contemplate the suspension of the faculties of those who do not take wives?"

"It seems to me that exception should be made in favour of those in Orders, and of course in favour of those who have reached a certain age like your Grace."

The Bishop coughed, and pretended to look for some paper which he had mislaid.

"This was one of the many points that I discussed with Father Michael Meehan."

"Oh, so you consulted Father Meehan," the Bishop said, looking up.

"He came in the day I was reading over my Latin translation before posting it. I'm afraid the ideas that I submitted to the consideration of His Holiness have been degraded by my very poor Latin. I should have wished Father Meehan to overlook my Latin, but he refused. He begged of me not to send the letter."

"Father Meehan," said his Grace, "is a great friend of yours. Yet nothing he could say could shake your resolution to write to Rome?"

"Nothing," said Father MacTurnan. "The call I received was too distinct and too clear for me to hesitate."

"Tell me about this call."

Father MacTurnan told the Bishop that the poor man had come out of the workhouse because he wanted to be married, and that Mike Mulhare would not give him his daughter until he had earned the price of a pig. "And as I was talking to him I heard my conscience say, 'No one can afford to marry in Ireland but the clergy.' We all live better than our parishioners."

And then, forgetting the Bishop, and talking as if he were alone with his God, he described how the conviction had taken possession of him—that Ireland would become a Protestant country if the Catholic emigration did not cease. And he told how this conviction had left him little peace until he had written his letter.

The priest talked on until he was interrupted by Father Moran.

"I have some business to transact with Father Moran now," the Bishop said, "but you must stay to dinner. You've walked a long way, and you are tired and hungry."

"But, your Grace, if I don't start now, I shan't get home until nightfall."

"A car will take you back, Father MacTurnan. I will see to that. I must have some exact information about your poor people. We must do something for them."

Father MacTurnan and the Bishop were talking together when the car came to take Father MacTurnan home, and the Bishop said:

"Father MacTurnan, you have borne the loneliness of your parish a long while."

"Loneliness is only a matter of habit. I think, your Grace, I'm better suited to the place than I am for any other. I don't wish any change, if your Grace is satisfied with me."

"No one will look after the poor people better than yourself, Father MacTurnan. But," he said, "it seems to me there is one thing we have forgotten. You haven't told me if you have succeeded in getting the money to buy the pig."

Father MacTurnan grew very red. . . . "I had forgotten it. The relief works——"

"It's not too late. Here's five pounds, and this will buy him a pig."

"It will indeed," said the priest, "it will buy him two!"

He had left the Palace without having asked the Bishop how his letter had been received at Rome, and he stopped the car, and was about to tell the driver to go back. But no matter, he would hear about his letter some other time. He was bringing happiness to two poor people, and he could not persuade himself to delay their

happiness by one minute. He was not bringing one pig, but two pigs, and now Mike Mulhare would have to give him Norah and a calf; and the priest remembered that James Murdoch had said—"What a fine house this will be to rear them in." There were many who thought that human beings and animals should not live together; but after all, what did it matter if they were happy? And the priest forgot his letter to Rome in the thought of the happiness he was bringing to two poor people. He could not see Norah Mulhare that night; but he drove down to the famine road, and he and the driver called till they awoke James Murdoch. The poor man came stumbling across the bog, and the priest told him the news.

A PLAY-HOUSE IN THE WASTE

"IT'S a closed mouth that can hold a good story," as the saying goes, and very soon it got about that Father MacTurnan had written to Rome saying he was willing to take a wife to his bosom for patriotic reasons, if the Pope would relieve him of his vow of celibacy. And many phrases and words from his letter (translated by whom —by the Bishop or Father Meehan? Nobody ever knew) were related over the Dublin firesides, till at last out of the talk a tall gaunt man emerged, in an old overcoat green from weather and wear, the tails of it flapping as he rode his bicycle through the great waste bog that lies between Belmullet and Crossmolina. His name! We liked it. It appealed to our imagination. MacTurnan! It conveyed something from afar like Hamlet or Don Quixote. He seemed as near and as far from us as they, till Pat Comer, one of the organizers of the I.A.O.S., came in and said, after listening to the talk that was going round:

"Is it of the priest that rides in the great Mayo bog you are speaking? If it is, you haven't got the story rightly." As he told us the story, so it is printed in this book. And we sat wondering greatly, for we seemed to see a soul on its way to heaven. But round a fire there is always one who cannot get off the subject of women and blasphemy—a papist generally he is; and it was Quinn that evening who kept plaguing us with jokes, whether it would be a fat girl or a thin that the priest would choose if the Pope gave him leave to marry, until at last, losing all patience with him, I bade him be silent, and asked Pat Comer to tell us if the priest was meditating a new plan for Ireland's salvation.

"For a mind like his," I said, "would not stand still and problems such as ours waiting to be solved."

"You're wrong there! He thinks no more of Ireland, and neither reads nor plans, but knits stockings ever since the wind took his play-house away."

"Took his play-house away!" said several.

"And why would he be building a play-house," somebody asked, "and he living in a waste?"

"A queer idea, surely!" said another. "A play-house in the waste!"

"Yes, a queer idea," said Pat, "but a true one all the same, for I have seen it with my own eyes—or the ruins of it, and not later back than three weeks ago, when I was staying with the priest himself. You know the road, all of you—how it straggles from Foxford through the bog alongside of bog-holes deep enough to drown one, and into which the jarvey and myself seemed in great likelihood of pitching, for the car went down into great ruts, and the horse was shying from one side of the road to the other, and at nothing so far as we could see."

"There's nothing to be afeard of, yer honour; only once was he near leaving the road, the day before Christmas, and I driving the doctor. It was here he saw it—a white thing gliding, and the wheel of the car must have gone within an inch of the bog-hole."

"And the doctor. Did he see it?" I said.

"He saw it too, and so scared was he that the hair rose up and went through his cap."

"Did the jarvey laugh when he said that?" we asked Pat Comer; and Pat answered: "Not he! Them fellows just speak as the words come to them without thinking. Let me get on with my story. We drove on for about a mile, and it was to stop him from clicking his tongue at the horse that I asked him if the bog was Father MacTurnan's parish."

"Every mile of it, sir," he said, "every mile of it,

and we do be seeing him buttoned up in his old coat riding along the roads on his bicycle going to sick calls."

"Do you often be coming this road?" says I.

"Not very often, sir. No one lives here except the poor people, and the priest and the doctor. Faith! there isn't a poorer parish in Ireland, and every one of them would have been dead long ago if it had not been for Father James."

"And how does he help them?"

"Isn't he always writing letters to the Government asking for relief works? Do you see those bits of roads?"

"Where do those roads lead to?"

"Nowhere. Them roads stops in the middle of the bog when the money is out."

"But," I said, "surely it would be better if the money were spent upon permanent improvements — on drainage, for instance."

The jarvey didn't answer; he called to his horse, and not being able to stand the clicking of his tongue, I kept on about the drainage.

"There's no fall, sir."

"And the bog is too big," I added, in hope of encouraging conversation.

"Faith it is, sir."

"But we aren't very far from the sea, are we?"

"About a couple of miles."

"Well then," I said, "couldn't a harbour be made?"

"They were thinking about that, but there's no depth of water, and everyone's against emigration now."

"Ah! the harbour would encourage emigration."

"So it would, your honour."

"But is there no talk about home industries, weaving, lace-making?"

"I won't say that."

"But has it been tried?"

"The candle do be burning in the priest's window

till one in the morning, and he sitting up thinking of plans to keep the people at home. Now, do ye see that house, sir, fornint my whip at the top of the hill? Well, that's the play-house he built."

"A play-house?"

"Yes, yer honour. Father James hoped the people might come from Dublin to see it, for no play like it had ever been acted in Ireland before, sir!"

"And was the play performed?"

"No, yer honour. The priest had been learning them all the summer, but the autumn was on them before they had got it by rote, and a wind came and blew down one of the walls."

"And couldn't Father MacTurnan get the money to build it up?"

"Sure, he might have got the money, but where'd be the use when there was no luck in it?"

"And who were to act the play?"

"The girls and the boys in the parish, and the prettiest girl in all the parish was to play Good Deeds."

"So it was a miracle play," I said.

"Do you see that man? It's the priest coming out of Tom Burke's cabin, and I warrant he do be bringing him the Sacrament, and he having the holy oils with him, for Tom won't pass the day; we had the worst news of him last night."

"And I can tell you," said Pat Comer, dropping his story for a moment and looking round the circle, "it was a sad story the jarvey told me. He told it well, for I can see the one-roomed hovel full of peat-smoke, the black iron pot with traces of the yellow stirabout in it on the hearth, and the sick man on the pallet bed, and the priest by his side mumbling prayers together. Faith! these jarveys can tell a story—none better."

"As well as yourself, Pat," one of us said. And Pat began to tell of the miles of bog on either side of the

straggling road, of the hilltop to the left, with the play-house showing against the dark and changing clouds; of a woman in a red petticoat, a handkerchief tied round her head, who had flung down her spade the moment she caught sight of the car, of the man who appeared on the brow and blew a horn. "For she mistook us for bailiffs," said Pat, "and two little sheep hardly bigger than geese were driven away."

"A play-house in the waste for these people," I was saying to myself all the time, till my meditations were interrupted by the jarvey telling that the rocky river we crossed was called the Greyhound—a not inappropriate name, for it ran swiftly. . . . Away down the long road a white cottage appeared, and the jarvey said to me, "That is the priest's house." It stood on the hillside some little way from the road, and all the way to the door I wondered how his days passed in the great loneliness of the bog.

"His reverence isn't at home, yer honour—he's gone to attend a sick call."

"Yes, I know—Tom Burke."

"And is Tom better, Mike?"

"The devil a bether he'll be this side of Jordan," the jarvey answered, and the housekeeper showed me into the priest's parlour. It was lined with books, and I looked forward to a pleasant chat when we had finished our business. At that time I was on a relief committee, and the people were starving in the poor parts of the country.

"I think he'll be back in about an hour's time, yer honour." But the priest seemed to be detained longer than his housekeeper expected, and the moaning of the wind round the cottage reminded me of the small white thing the horse and the doctor had seen gliding along the road. "The priest knows the story—he will tell me," I said, and piled more turf on the fire—fine sods of

hard black turf they were, and well do I remember seeing them melting away. But all of a sudden my eyes closed. I couldn't have been asleep more than a few minutes when it seemed to me a great crowd of men and women had gathered about the house, and a moment after the door was flung open, and a tall, gaunt man faced me.

"I've just come," he said, "from a deathbed, and they that have followed me aren't far from death if we don't succeed in getting help."

I don't know how I can tell you of the crowd I saw round the house that day. We are accustomed to see poor people in towns cowering under arches, but it is more pitiful to see people starving in the fields on the mountain side. I don't know why it should be so, but it is. But I call to mind two men in ragged trousers and shirts as ragged, with brown beards on faces yellow with famine; and the words of one of them are not easily forgotten: "The white sun of heaven doesn't shine upon two poorer men than upon this man and myself." I can tell you I didn't envy the priest his job, living all his life in the waste listening to tales of starvation, looking into famished faces. There were some women among them, kept back by the men, who wanted to get their word in first. They seemed to like to talk about their misery . . . and I said:

"They are tired of seeing each other. I am a spectacle, a show, an amusement for them. I don't know if you can catch my meaning?"

"I think I do," Father James answered. And I asked him to come for a walk up the hill and show me the play-house.

Again he hesitated, and I said: "You must come, Father MacTurnan, for a walk. You must forget the misfortunes of those people for a while." He yielded, and we spoke of the excellence of the road under our

feet, and he told me that when he conceived the idea of a play-house, he had already succeeded in persuading the inspector to agree that the road they were making should go to the top of the hill. "The policy of the Government," he said, "from the first was that relief works should benefit nobody except the workers, and it is sometimes very difficult to think out a project for work that will be perfectly useless. Arches have been built on the top of hills, and roads that lead nowhere. A strange sight to the stranger a road must be that stops suddenly in the middle of a bog. One wonders at first how a Government could be so foolish, but when one thinks of it, it is easy to understand that the Government doesn't wish to spend money on works that will benefit a class. But the road that leads nowhere is difficult to make, even though starving men are employed upon it; for a man to work well there must be an end in view, and I can tell you it is difficult to bring even starving men to engage on a road that leads nowhere. If I'd told everything I am telling you to the inspector, he wouldn't have agreed to let the road run to the top of the hill; but I said to him: 'The road leads nowhere; as well let it end at the top of the hill as down in the valley.' So I got the money for my road and some money for my play-house, for of course the play-house was as useless as the road; a play-house in the waste can neither interest nor benefit anybody! But there was an idea at the back of my mind all the time that when the road and the play-house were finished, I might be able to induce the Government to build a harbour."

"But the harbour would be of use."

"Of very little," he answered. "For the harbour to be of use a great deal of dredging would have to be done."

"And the Government needn't undertake the dredg-

ing. How very ingenious! I suppose you often come here to read your breviary?"

"During the building of the play-house I often used to be up here, and during the rehearsals I was here every day."

"If there was a rehearsal," I said to myself, "there must have been a play." And I affected interest in the grey shallow sea and the erosion of the low-lying land—a salt marsh filled with pools.

"I thought once," said the priest, "that if the play were a great success, a line of flat-bottomed steamers might be built."

"Sitting here in the quiet evenings," I said to myself, "reading his breviary, dreaming of a line of steamships crowded with visitors! He has been reading about the Oberammergau performances." So that was his game—the road, the play-house, the harbour—and I agreed with him that no one would have dared to predict that visitors would have come from all sides of Europe to see a few peasants performing a miracle play in the Tyrol.

"Come," I said, "into the play-house and let me see how you built it."

Half a wall and some of the roof had fallen, and the rubble had not been cleared away, and I said:

"It will cost many pounds to repair the damage, but having gone so far you should give the play a chance."

"I don't think it would be advisable," he muttered, half to himself, half to me.

As you may well imagine, I was anxious to hear if he had discovered any aptitude for acting among the girls and the boys who lived in the cabins.

"I think," he answered me, "that the play would have been fairly acted; I think that, with a little practice, we might have done as well as they did at Oberammergau."

An odd man, more willing to discuss the play that

he had chosen than the talents of those who were going to perform it, and he told me that it had been written in the fourteenth century in Latin, and that he had translated it into Irish.

I asked him if it would have been possible to organize an excursion from Dublin—"Oberammergau in the West."

"I used to think so. But it is eight miles from Rathowen, and the road is a bad one, and when they got here there would be no place for them to stay; they would have to go all the way back again, and that would be sixteen miles."

"Yet you did well, Father James, to build the play-house, for the people could work better while they thought they were accomplishing something. Let me start a subscription for you in Dublin."

"I don't think that it would be possible——"

"Not for me to get fifty pounds?"

"You might get the money, but I don't think we could ever get a performance of the play."

"And why not?" I said.

"You see, the wind came and blew down the wall. The people are very pious; I think they felt that the time they spent rehearsing might have been better spent. The play-house disturbed them in their ideas. They hear Mass on Sundays, and there are the Sacraments, and they remember they have to die. It used to seem to me a very sad thing to see all the people going to America; the poor Celt disappearing in America, leaving his own country, leaving his language, and very often his religion."

"And does it no longer seem to you sad that such a thing should happen?"

"No, not if it is the will of God. God has specially chosen the Irish race to convert the world. No race has provided so many missionaries, no race has preached the

Gospel more frequently to the heathen; and once we realize that we have to die, and very soon, and that the Catholic Church is the only true Church, our ideas about race and nationality fade from us. *We* are here, not to make life successful and triumphant, but to gain heaven. That is the truth, and it is to the honour of the Irish people that they have been selected by God to preach the truth, even though they lose their nationality in preaching it. I do not expect you to accept these opinions. I know that you think very differently, but living here I have learned to acquiesce in the will of God."

He stopped speaking suddenly, like one ashamed of having expressed himself too openly, and soon after we were met by a number of peasants, and the priest's attention was engaged; the inspector of the relief works had to speak to him; and I didn't see him again until dinner-time.

"You have given them hope," he said.

This was gratifying to hear, and the priest sat listening while I told him of the looms already established in different parts of the country. We talked about half an hour, and then like one who suddenly remembers, the priest got up and fetched his knitting.

"Do you knit every evening?"

"I have got into the way of knitting lately—it passes the time."

"But do you never read?" I asked, and my eyes went towards the bookshelves.

"I used to read a great deal. But there wasn't a woman in the parish that could turn a heel properly, so I had to learn to knit."

"Do you like knitting better than reading?" I asked, feeling ashamed of my curiosity.

"I have constantly to attend sick calls, and if one is absorbed in a book one doesn't like to put it aside."

"I see you have two volumes of miracle plays!"

"Yes, and that's another danger: a book begets all kinds of ideas and notions into one's head. The idea of that play-house came out of those books."

"But," I said, "you don't think that God sent the storm because He didn't wish a play to be performed?"

"One cannot judge God's designs. Whether God sent the storm or whether it was accident must remain a matter for conjecture; but it is not a matter of conjecture that one is doing certain good by devoting oneself to one's daily task, getting the Government to start new relief works, establishing schools for weaving. The people are entirely dependent upon me, and when I'm attending to their wants I know I'm doing right."

The play-house interested me more than the priest's ideas of right and wrong, and I tried to get him back to it; but the subject seemed a painful one, and I said to myself: "The jarvey will tell me all about it to-morrow. I can rely on him to find out the whole story from the housekeeper in the kitchen." And sure enough, we hadn't got to the Greyhound River before he was leaning across the well of the car talking to me and asking if the priest was thinking of putting up the wall of the play-house.

"The wall of the play-house?" I said.

"Yes, yer honour. Didn't I see both of you going up the hill in the evening time?"

"I don't think we shall ever see a play in the play-house."

"Why would we, since it was God that sent the wind that blew it down?"

"How do you know it was God that sent the wind? It might have been the devil himself, or somebody's curse."

"Sure it is of Mrs. Sheridan you do be thinking, yer honour, and of her daughter—she that was to be playing Good Deeds in the play, yer honour; and wasn't she

wake coming home from the learning of the play? And when the signs of her wakeness began to show, the widow Sheridan took a halter off the cow and tied Margaret to the wall, and she was in the stable till the child was born. Then didn't her mother take a bit of string and tie it round the child's throat, and bury it near the play-house; and it was three nights after that the storm rose, and the child pulled the thatch out of the roof."

"But did she murder the child?"

"Sorra wan of me knows. She sent for the priest when she was dying, and told him what she had done."

"But the priest wouldn't tell what he heard in the confessional," I said.

"Mrs. Sheridan didn't die that night; not till the end of the week, and the neighbours heard her talking of the child she had buried, and then they all knew what the white thing was they had seen by the roadside. The night the priest left her he saw the white thing standing in front of him, and if he hadn't been a priest he'd have dropped down dead; so he took some water from the bog-hole and dashed it over it, saying, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!'"

The driver told his story like one saying his prayers, and he seemed to have forgotten that he had a listener.

"It must have been a great shock to the priest."

"Faith it was, sir, to meet an unbaptized child on the roadside, and that child the only bastard that was ever born in the parish—so Tom Mulhare says, and he's the oldest man in the county."

"It was altogether a very queer idea—this play-house."

"It was indeed, sir, a quare idea, but you see he's a quare man. He has been always thinking of something to do good, and it is said that he thinks too much. Father James is a very quare man, your honour."

JULIA CAHILL'S CURSE

"AND what has become of Margaret?"

"Ah, didn't her mother send her to America as soon as the baby was born? Once a woman is wake here she has to go. Hadn't Julia to go in the end, and she the only one that ever said she didn't mind the priest?"

"Julia who?" said I.

"Julia Cahill."

The name struck my fancy, and I asked the driver to tell me her story.

"Wasn't it Father Madden who had her put out of the parish, but she put her curse on it, and it's on it to this day."

"Do you believe in curses?"

"Bedad I do, sir. It's a terrible thing to put a curse on a man, and the curse that Julia put on Father Madden's parish was a bad one, the divil a worse. The sun was up at the time, and she on the hilltop raising both her hands. And the curse she put on the parish was that every year a roof must fall in and a family go to America. That was the curse, your honour, and every word of it has come true. You'll see for yourself as soon as we cross the mearing."

"And what became of Julia's baby?"

"I never heard she had one, sir."

He flicked his horse pensively with his whip, and it seemed to me that the disbelief I had expressed in the power of the curse disinclined him for further conversation.

"But," I said, "who is Julia Cahill, and how did she get the power to put a curse upon the village?"

" Didn't she go into the mountains every night to meet the fairies, and who else could 've given her the power to put a curse on the village? "

" But she couldn't walk so far in one evening."

" Them that's in league with the fairies can walk that far and as much farther in an evening, your honour. A shepherd saw her; and you'll see the ruins of the cabins for yourself as soon as we cross the mearing, and I'll show you the cabin of the blind woman that Julia lived with before she went away."

" And how long is it since she went? "

" About twenty year, and there hasn't been a girl the like of her in these parts since. I was only a gossoon at the time, but I've heard tell she was as tall as I'm myself, and as straight as a poplar. She walked with a little swing in her walk, so that all the boys used to be looking after her, and she had fine black eyes, sir, and she was nearly always laughing. Father Madden had just come to the parish; and there was courting in these parts then, for aren't we the same as other people—we'd like to go out with a girl well enough if it was the custom of the country. Father Madden put down the ball alley because he said the boys stayed there instead of going into Mass, and he put down the cross-road dances because he said dancing was the cause of many a bastard, and he wanted none in his parish. Now there was no dancer like Julia; the boys used to gather about to see her dance, and who ever walked with her under the hedges in the summer could never think about another woman. The village was cracked about her. There was fighting, so I suppose the priest was right: he had to get rid of her. But I think he mightn't have been as hard on her as he was.

" One evening he went down to the house. Julia's people were well-to-do people, they kept a grocery-store in the village; and when he came into the shop who should be there but the richest farmer in the country, Michael

Moran by name, trying to get Julia for his wife. He didn't go straight to Julia, and that's what swept him. There are two counters in that shop, and Julia was at the one on the left hand as you go in. And many's the pound she had made for her parents at that counter. Michael Moran says to the father, 'Now, what fortune are you going to give with Julia?' And the father says there was many a man who would take her without any; and that's how they spoke, and Julia listening quietly all the while at the opposite counter. For Michael didn't know what a spirited girl she was, but went on arguing till he got the father to say fifty pounds, and thinking he had got him so far he said, 'I'll never drop a flap to her unless you give the two heifers.' Julia never said a word, she just sat listening. It was then that the priest came in. And over he goes to Julia; 'And now,' says he, 'aren't you proud to hear that you'll have such a fine fortune, and it's I that'll be glad to see you married, for I can't have any more of your goings-on in my parish. You're the encouragement of the dancing and courting here; but I'm going to put an end to it.' Julia didn't answer a word, and he went over to them that were arguing about the sixty pounds. 'Now why not make it fifty-five?' says he. So the father agreed to that since the priest had said it. And all three of them thought the marriage was settled. 'Now what will you be taking, Father Tom?' says Cahill, 'and you, Michael?' Sorra one of them thought of asking her if she was pleased with Michael; but little did they know what was passing in her mind, and when they came over to the counter to tell her what they had settled, she said, 'Well, I've just been listening to you, and 'tis well for you to be wasting your time talking about me,' and she tossed her head, saying she would just pick the boy out of the parish that pleased her best. And what angered the priest most of all was her way of saying it—that the boy that would marry her would be marrying

herself and not the money that would be paid when the book was signed or when the first baby was born. Now it was agin girls marrying according to their fancy that Father Madden had set himself. He had said in his sermon the Sunday before that young people shouldn't be allowed out by themselves at all, but that the parents should make up the marriages for them. And he went fairly wild when Julia told him the example she was going to set. He tried to keep his temper, sir, but it was getting the better of him all the while, and Julia said, 'My boy isn't in the parish now, but maybe he is on his way here, and he may be here to-morrow or the next day.' And when Julia's father heard her speak like that he knew that no one would turn her from what she was saying, and he said, 'Michael Moran, my good man, you may go your way: you'll never get her.' Then he went back to hear what Julia was saying to the priest, but it was the priest that was talking. 'Do you think,' says he, 'I am going to let you go on turning the head of every boy in the parish? Do you think,' says he, 'I'm going to see you gallivanting with one and then with the other? Do you think I'm going to see fighting and quarrelling for your like? Do you think I'm going to hear stories like I heard last week about poor Patsy Carey, who has gone out of his mind, they say, on account of your treatment? No,' says he, 'I'll have no more of that. I'll have you out of my parish, or I'll have you married.' Julia didn't answer the priest; she tossed her head, and went on making up parcels of tea and sugar and getting the steps and taking down candles, though she didn't want them, just to show the priest that she didn't mind what he was saying. And all the while her father trembling, not knowing what would happen, for the priest had a big stick, and there was no saying that he wouldn't strike her. Cahill tried to quiet the priest, he promising him that Julia shouldn't go out any more in the evenings, and bedad, sir, she was out

the same evening with a young man and the priest saw them, and the next evening she was out with another and the priest saw them, nor was she minded at the end of the month to marry any of them. Then the priest went down to the shop to speak to her a second time, and he went down again a third time, though what he said the third time no one knows, no one being there at the time. And next Sunday he spoke out, saying that a disobedient daughter would have the worst devil in hell to attend on her. I've heard tell that he called her the evil spirit that set men mad. But most of the people that were there are dead or gone to America, and no one rightly knows what he did say, only that the words came pouring out of his mouth, and the people when they saw Julia crossed themselves, and even the boys who were most mad after Julia were afraid to speak to her. Cahill had to put her out."

"Do you mean to say that the father put his daughter out?"

"Sure, didn't the priest threaten to turn him into a rabbit if he didn't, and no one in the parish would speak to Julia, they were so afraid of Father Madden, and if it hadn't been for the blind woman that I was speaking about a while ago, sir, it is to the poorhouse she'd have to go. The blind woman has a little cabin at the edge of the bog—I'll point it out to you, sir; we do be passing it by—and she was with the blind woman for nearly two years disowned by her own father. Her clothes wore out, but she was as beautiful without them as with them. The boys were told not to look back, but sure they couldn't help it.

"Ah, it was a long while before Father Madden could get shut of her. The blind woman said she wouldn't see Julia thrown out on the roadside, and she was as good as her word for wellnigh two years, till Julia went to America, so some do be saying, sir, whilst others do be saying she joined the fairies. But 'tis for sure, sir, that the day

she left the parish Pat Quinn heard a knocking at his window and somebody asking if he would lend his cart to go to the railway station. Pat was a heavy sleeper and he didn't get up, and it is thought that it was Julia who wanted Pat's cart to take her to the station; it's a good ten mile; but she got there all the same!"

"You said something about a curse?"

"Yes, sir. You'll see the hill presently. A man who was taking some sheep to the fair saw her there. The sun was just getting up and he saw her cursing the village, raising both her hands, sir, up to the sun, and since that curse was spoken every year a roof has fallen in, sometimes two or three."

I could see he believed the story, and for the moment I, too, believed in an outcast Venus becoming the evil spirit of a village that would not accept her as divine.

"Look, sir, the woman coming down the road is Bridget Coyne. And that's her house," he said, and we passed a house built of loose stones without mortar, but a little better than the mud cabins I had seen in Father MacTurnan's parish.

"And now, sir, you will see the loneliest parish in Ireland."

And I noticed that though the land was good, there seemed to be few people on it, and what was more significant than the untilled fields were the ruins for they were not the cold ruins of twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago when the people were evicted and their tillage turned into pasture—the ruins I saw were the ruins of cabins that had been lately abandoned, and I said:

"It wasn't the landlord who evicted these people."

"Ah, it's the landlord who would be glad to have them back, but there's no getting them back. Everyone here will have to go, and 'tis said that the priest will say Mass in an empty chapel, sorra a one will be there but Bridget, and she'll be the last he'll give communion to. It's said,

your honour, that Julia has been seen in America, and I'm going there this autumn. You may be sure I'll keep a lookout for her."

"But all this is twenty years ago. You won't know her. A woman changes a good deal in twenty years."

"There will be no change in her, your honour. Sure hasn't she been with the fairies?"

THE WEDDING GOWN

IT was said, but with what truth I cannot say, that the Roche property had been owned by the O'Dwyers many years ago, several generations past, some time in the eighteenth century. Only a faint legend of this ownership remained; only once had young Mr. Roche heard of it, and it was from his mother he had heard it; among the country people it was forgotten. His mother had told him that his great-great-grandfather, who had made large sums of money abroad, had increased his property by purchase from the O'Dwyers, who then owned, as well as farmed, the hillside on which the Big House stood. The O'Dwyers themselves had forgotten that they were once much greater people than they now were, but the master never spoke to them without remembering it, for though they only thought of themselves as small farmers, dependents on the squire, every one of them, boys and girls alike, retained an air of high birth, which at the first glance distinguished them from the other tenants of the estate. Though they were not aware of it, some sense of their remote origin must have survived in them, and I think that in a still more obscure way some sense of it survived in the countryside, for the villagers did not think worse of the O'Dwyers because they kept themselves aloof from the pleasures of the village and its squabbles. The O'Dwyers kept themselves apart from their fellows without any show of pride, without wounding anyone's feelings.

The head of the family was a man of forty, and he was the trusted servant, almost the friend, of the young master. He was his bailiff and his steward, and he lived in

a pretty cottage by the edge of the lake. O'Dwyer's aunts—they were old women of sixty-eight and seventy—lived in the Big House; the elder had been cook, and the younger housemaid, and both were now past their work, and they lived full of gratitude to the young master, to whom they thought they owed a great deal. He believed the debt to be all on his side, and when he was away he often thought of them, and when he returned home he went to greet them as he might go to the members of his own family. The family of the O'Dwyers was long-lived, and Betty and Mary had a sister far older than themselves, Margaret Kirwin, "Granny Kirwin," as she was called, and she lived in the cottage by the lake with her nephew, Alec O'Dwyer. She was over eighty—it was said that she was nearly ninety—but her age was not known exactly. Mary O'Dwyer said that Margaret was nearly twenty years older than she, but neither Betty nor Mary remembered the exact date of their sister's birth. They did not know much about her, for though she was their sister, she was almost a stranger to them. She had married when she was sixteen, and had gone away to another part of the country, and they had hardly heard of her for thirty years. It was said that she had been a very pretty girl, and that many men had been in love with her, and it was known for certain that she had gone away with the son of the gamekeeper of the grandfather of the present Mr. Roche, so you can understand what a very long while ago it was, and how little of the story of her life had come to the knowledge of those living now.

It was certainly sixty years since she had gone away with this young man; she had lived with him in Meath for some years, nobody knew exactly how many years, maybe some nine or ten years, and then he had died suddenly, and his death, it appears, had taken away from her some part of her reason. It was known for certain that she left Meath after his death, and had remained away many

years. She had returned to Meath about twenty years ago, though not to the place she had lived in before. Some said she had experienced misfortunes so great that they had unsettled her mind. She herself had forgotten her story, and one day news had come to Galway—news, but it was sad news, that she was living in some very poor cottage on the edge of Navan town where her strange behaviour and her strange life had made a scandal of her. The priest had to inquire out her relations, and it took him some time to do this, for the old woman's answers were incoherent, but he at length discovered she came from Galway, and he had written to the O'Dwyers. And immediately on receiving the priest's letter, Alec sent his wife to Navan, and she had come back with the old woman.

"And it was time indeed that I went to fetch her," she said. "The boys in the town used to make game of her, and follow her, and throw things at her, and they nearly lost the poor thing the little reason that was left to her. The rain was coming through the thatch, there was hardly a dry place in the cabin, and she had nothing to eat but a few scraps that the neighbours gave her. Latterly she had forgotten how to make a fire, and she ate the potatoes the neighbours gave her raw, and on her back there were only a few dirty rags. She had no care for anything except for her wedding gown. She kept that in a box covered over with paper so that no damp should get to it, and she was always folding it and seeing that the moth didn't touch it, and she was talking of it when I came in at the door. She thought that I had come to steal it from her. The neighbours told me that that was the way she always was, thinking that someone had come to steal her wedding gown."

And this was all the news of Margaret Kirwin that Alec O'Dwyer's wife brought back with her. The old woman was given a room in the cottage, and though with

food and warmth and kind treatment she became a little less bewildered, a little less like a wild, hunted creature, she never got back her memory sufficiently to tell them all that had happened to her after her husband's death. Nor did she seem as if she wanted to try to remember: she was garrulous only of her early days when the parish bells rang for her wedding, and the furze was in bloom. This was before the Big House on the hill had been built. The hill was then a fine pasture for sheep, and Margaret would often describe the tinkling of the sheep-bells in the valley, and the yellow furze, and the bells that were ringing for her wedding. She always spoke of the bells, though no one could understand where the bells came from. It was not customary to ring the parish bell for weddings, and there was no other bell, so that it was impossible to say how Margaret could have got the idea into her head that bells were ringing for her when she crossed the hill on her way to the church, dressed in the beautiful gown, which the grandmother of the present Mr. Roche had dressed her in, for she had always been the favourite, she said, with the old mistress, a much greater favourite than even her two sisters had ever been. Betty and Mary were then little children and hardly remembered the wedding, and could say nothing about the bells.

Margaret Kirwin walked with a short stick, her head lifted hardly higher than the handle, and when the family were talking round the kitchen fire she would come among them for a while and say something to them, and then go away, and they felt they had seen someone from another world. She hobbled now and then as far as the garden gate, and she frightened the peasantry, so strange did she seem among the flowers—so old and forlorn, almost cut off from this world, with only one memory to link her to it. It was the spectral look in her eyes that frightened them, for Margaret was not ugly. In spite of all her wrinkles the form of the face remained, and it was easy, especially

when her little grandniece was by, to see that sixty-five years ago she must have had a long and pleasant face, such as one sees in a fox, and red hair like Molly.

Molly was sixteen, and her grey dress reached only to her ankles. Everyone was fond of the poor old woman; but it was only Molly who had no fear of her at all, and one would often see them standing together beside the pretty paling that separated the steward's garden from the highroad. Chestnut-trees grew about the house, and China roses over the walls, and in the course of the summer there would be lilies in the garden, and in the autumn hollyhocks and sunflowers. There were a few fruit-trees a little further on, and, lower down, a stream. A little bridge led over the stream into the meadow, and Molly and her grandaunt used to go as far as the bridge, and everyone wondered what the child and the old woman had to say to each other. Molly was never able to give any clear account of what the old woman said to her during the time they spent by the stream. She had tried once to give Molly an account of one long winter when the lake was frozen from side to side. Then there was something running in her mind about the transport of pillars in front of the Big House—how they had been drawn across the lake by oxen, and how one of the pillars was now lying at the bottom of the lake. That was how Molly took up the story from her, but she understood little of it. Molly's solicitude for the old woman was a subject of admiration, and Molly did not like to take the credit for a kindness and pity which she did not altogether feel. She had never seen anyone dead, and her secret fear was that the old woman might die before she went away to service. Her parents had promised to allow her to go away when she was eighteen, and she lived in the hope that her aunt would live two years longer, and that she would be saved the terror of seeing a dead body. And it was in this intention that she served her aunt, that she carefully

minced the old woman's food and insisted on her eating often, and that she darted from her place to fetch the old woman her stick when she rose to go. When Margaret Kirwin was not in the kitchen Molly was always laughing and talking, and her father and mother often thought it was her voice that brought the old woman out of her room. So the day Molly was grieving because she could not go to the dance the old woman remained in her room, and not seeing her at tea-time they began to be afraid, and Molly was asked to go to fetch her aunt.

"Something may have happened to her, mother. I daren't go."

And when old Margaret came into the kitchen towards evening she surprised everyone by her question:

"Why is Molly crying?"

No one else had heard Molly sob, if she had sobbed, but everyone knew the reason of her grief; indeed, she had been reproved for it many times that day.

"I will not hear any more about it," said Mrs. O'Dwyer; "she has been very tiresome all day. Is it my fault if I cannot give her a gown to go to the dance?" And then, forgetting that old Margaret could not understand her, she told her that the servants were having a dance at the Big House, and had asked Molly to come to it. "But what can I do? She has got no gown to go in. Even if I had the money there wouldn't be time to send for one now, nor to make one. And there are a number of English servants stopping at the house; there are people from all parts of the country, they have brought their servants with them, and I am not going to see my girl worse dressed than the others, so she cannot go. She has heard all this, she knows it. . . . I've never seen her so tiresome before." Mrs. O'Dwyer continued to chide her daughter; but her mother's reasons for not allowing her to go to the ball, though unanswerable, did not seem to console Molly, and she sat looking very miserable. "She

has been sitting like that all day," said Mrs. O'Dwyer, " and I wish that it were to-morrow, for she will not be better until it is all over."

" But, mother, I am saying nothing; I'll go to bed. I don't know why you're blaming me. I'm saying nothing. I can't help feeling miserable."

" No, she don't look a bit cheerful," the old woman said, " and I don't like her to be disappointed. This was the first time that old Margaret had seemed to understand since she came to live with them what was passing about her, and they all looked at her, Mrs. O'Dwyer and Alec and Molly. They stood waiting for her to speak again, wondering if the old woman's speech was an accident, or if she had recovered her mind. " It is a hard thing for a child at her age not to be able to go to the dance at the Big House, now that she has been asked. No wonder there is not a smile on her face. I remember the time that I should have been crying too for a dance, and isn't she the very same? "

" But, Granny, she can't go in the clothes she is wearing, and she has only got one other frock, the one she goes to Mass in. I can't let my daughter——"

But seeing the old woman was about to speak Alec stopped his wife.

" Let's hear what she has to say," he whispered.

" There's my wedding gown, it's beautiful enough for anyone to wear. It hasn't been worn since the day I wore it, when the bells were ringing, and I went over the hill to be married; and I've taken such care of it that it is the same as it was that day. Molly will look very nice in it, she will look just as I looked on my wedding day."

And they stood astonished—father, mother, and daughter—for the old woman, ever since she had come to live with them, had kept her wedding gown sacred from their eyes and hands, closing her door before taking it out to give it the air and strew it with camphor. Only once they

had seen it. She had brought it out one day and shown it to them as a child might show a toy; but the moment Mrs. O'Dwyer put out her hand to touch it, Granny had gone away with her gown, and they had heard her shutting the box it was in. Now she was going to lend it to Molly, so she said, but they fully expected her to turn away and to go to her room, forgetful of what she had said. Even if she were to let Molly put the dress on, she would not let her go out of the house with it. She would change her mind at the last minute.

"When does this dancing begin?" she asked, and when they told her she said there would be just time for her to dress Molly, and asked the girl to come into her room. Mrs. O'Dwyer feared the girl would be put to a bitter disappointment, but if Molly once had the gown on she would not oblige her to take it off.

"In my gown you will be just like what I was when the bells were ringing."

She took the gown out of its box herself, the petticoat and the stockings and the shoes.

"The old mistress gave me all these. Molly has gotten the hair I used to have, and will look like myself. Aren't they beautiful shoes? Look at the buckles, and they'll fit her, for her feet are the same size as mine were."

Molly's feet went into the shoes just as if they had been made for her, and the gown fitted as well as the shoes, and Molly's hair was arranged according to the old woman's fancy, as she used to wear her own hair when it was thick and red like a fox's.

The girl thought that Granny would regret her gifts, and she expected the old woman to follow her into the kitchen and ask her to give back the gown as she was going out of the house. As she stood on the threshold her mother offered her the key; the ball would not be over till five, and Granny said she'd stay up for her.

"I'll doze a bit upon a chair. If I am tired I'll lie

down upon my bed. I shall hear Molly; I shan't sleep much. She'll not be able to enter the house without my hearing her."

It was extraordinary to hear her speak like this, and, a little frightened by her sudden sanity, they tried to persuade her to allow them to lock up the house; but she sat looking into the fire, seemingly so contented that they left her, and for an hour she sat dreaming, seeing Molly young and beautifully dressed in the wedding gown of more than sixty years ago.

Dream after dream went by, the fire had burned low, the sods were falling into white ashes, and the moonlight began to stream into the room. It was the chilliness that had come into the air that awoke her, and she threw several sods of turf on to the fire.

An hour passed, and old Margaret awoke. "The bells are ringing, the bells are ringing," she said, and went to the kitchen door; she opened it, and under the rays of the moon she stood lost in memories, for the night of her marriage was just such a night as this one, and she had stood in the garden amid the summer flowers, just as she did now.

"The day is beginning," she said, mistaking the moonlight for the dawn, and, listening, it seemed to her that she heard once more the sound of bells coming across the hill. "Yes, the bells are ringing," she said; "I can hear them quite clearly, and must hurry and get dressed—I must not keep him waiting."

And, returning to the house, she went to her box, where her gown had lain so many years; and though no gown was there it seemed to her that there was one, and one more beautiful than the gown she had cherished. It was the same gown, only grown more beautiful. It had passed into softer silk, into a more delicate colour; it had become more beautiful, and holding the dream-gown in her hands, she sat with it in the moonlight thinking how fair he

would find her in it. Once her hands went to her hair, and then she dropped them again.

"I must begin to dress myself; I mustn't keep him waiting."

The moonlight lay still upon her knees, but little by little the moon moved up the sky, leaving her in the shadow.

It was at this moment, as the shadows grew denser about old Margaret, that the child who was dancing at the ball came to think of her who had given her her gown, and who was waiting for her. It was in the middle of a reel she was dancing, and she was dancing it with Mr. Roche, that she felt that something had happened to her aunt.

"Mr. Roche," she said, "you must let me go away; I cannot dance any more to-night. I am sure that something has happened to my aunt, the old woman, Margaret Kirwin, who lives with us in the Lodge. It was she who lent me this gown. This was her wedding gown, and for sixty-five years it has never been out of her possession. She has hardly allowed anyone to see it; but she said that I was like her, and she heard me crying because I had no gown to go to the ball, and so she lent me her wedding gown."

"You look very nice, Molly, in the wedding gown, and this is only a fancy." Seeing the girl was frightened and wanted to go, he said: "But why do you think that anything has happened to your aunt?"

"She is very old."

"But she isn't much older than she was when you left her."

"Let me go, Mr. Roche; I think I must go. I feel sure that something has happened to her. I never had such a feeling before, and I couldn't have that feeling if there was no reason for it."

"Well, if you must go."

She glanced to where the moon was shining and ran down the drive, leaving Mr. Roche looking after her, wondering if after all she might have had a warning of the old woman's death. The night was one of those beautiful nights in May, when the moon soars high in the sky, and all the woods and fields are clothed in the green of spring. But the stillness of the night frightened Molly, and when she stopped to pick up her dress she heard the ducks chattering in the reeds. The world seemed divided into darkness and light. The hawthorn-trees threw black shadows that reached into the hollows, and Molly did not dare to go by the path that led through a little wood, lest she should meet Death there. For now it seemed to her that she was running a race with Death, and that she must get to the cottage before him. She did not dare to take the short cut, but she ran till her breath failed her. She ran on again, but when she went through the wicket she knew that Death had been before her. She knocked twice; receiving no answer she tried the latch, and was surprised to find the door unlocked. There was a little fire among the ashes, and after blowing the sod for some time she managed to light the candle, and holding it high she looked about the kitchen.

"Auntie, are you asleep? Have the others gone to bed?"

She approached a few steps, and then a strange curiosity came over her, and though she had always feared death she now looked curiously upon death, and she thought that she saw the likeness which her aunt had often noticed.

"Yes," she said, "she is like me. I shall be like that some day if I live long enough."

And then she knocked at the door of the room where her parents were sleeping.

THE CLERK'S QUEST

FOR thirty years Edward Dempsey had worked low down in the list of clerks in the firm of Quin and Wee. He did his work so well that he seemed born to do it, and it was felt that any change in which Dempsey was concerned would be unlucky. Managers had looked at Dempsey doubtingly and had left him in his habits. New partners had come into the business, but Dempsey showed no sign of interest. He was interested only in his desk. There it was by the dim window—there were his pens, there was his penwiper, there was the ruler, there was the blotting-pad. Dempsey was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. Once in thirty years of service he had accepted a holiday; it had been a topic of conversation all the morning, and the clerks tittered when he came into the bank in the afternoon saying he had been looking into the shop windows, and had come down to the bank to see how they were getting on.

An obscure, clandestine, taciturn little man occupying in life only the space necessary to bend over a desk, and whose conical head leaned to one side as if in token of his humility.

It seemed that Dempsey had no other ambition than to be allowed to stagnate at a desk to the end of his life, and this modest ambition would have been realized had it not been for a slight accident—the single accident that had found its way into Dempsey's well-ordered and closely-guarded life. One summer's day, when the heat of the areas was rising and filling the open window, Dempsey's somnolescent senses were moved by a soft and

suave perfume. At first he was puzzled to say whence it came; then he perceived that it had come from the bundle of cheques which he held in his hand; and then that the odoriferous paper was a pale pink cheque in the middle of the bundle. He had hardly seen a flower for thirty years, and could not determine whether the odour was that of mignonette, or honeysuckle, or violet. But at that moment the cheques were called for; he handed them to his superior, and with cool hand and clear brain continued to make entries in the ledger until the bank closed.

But that night, just as he was falling asleep, a remembrance of the insinuating perfume returned to him. He wondered whose cheque it was, and regretted not having looked at the signature, and many times during the succeeding weeks he paused as he was making entries in the ledger to think if the haunting perfume were rose, lavender, or mignonette. It was not the scent of rose, he was sure of that. And a vague swaying of hope began. Dreams that had died or had never been born floated up like things from the depths of the sea, and many old things that he had dreamed about or had never dreamed at all drifted about. Out of the depths of life a hope that he had never known, or that the severe rule of his daily life had checked long ago, began its struggle for life; and when the same sweet odour came again—he knew now it was the scent of heliotrope—his heart was lifted and he was overcome in a sweet, possessive trouble. He sought for the cheque amid the bundle of cheques, and finding it, he pressed the paper to his face. The cheque was written in a thin, feminine handwriting, and was signed "Henrietta Brown," and the name and handwriting were pregnant with occult significances in Dempsey's disturbed mind. His hand paused amid the entries, and he grew suddenly aware of some dim, shadowy form, gracile and sweet-smelling as the spring—moist shadow of wandering cloud, emanation of earth, or woman herself. Demp-

sey pondered, and his absent-mindedness was noticed, and occasioned comment among the clerks.

For the first time in his life he was glad when the office hours were over. He wanted to be alone, he wanted to think, he felt he must abandon himself to the new influence that had so suddenly and unexpectedly entered his life. Henrietta Brown! the name persisted in his mind like a half-forgotten, half-remembered tune; and in his efforts to realize her beauty he stopped before the photographic displays in the shop windows; but none of the famous or the infamous celebrities there helped him in the least. He could only realize Henrietta Brown by turning his thoughts from without and seeking the intimate sense of her perfumed cheques. The end of every month brought a cheque from Henrietta Brown, and for a few moments the clerk was transported and lived beyond himself.

An idea had fixed itself in his mind. He knew not if Henrietta Brown was young or old, pretty or ugly, married or single; the perfume and the name were sufficient, and could no longer be separated from the idea, now forcing its way through the fissures in the failing brain of this poor little bachelor clerk—that idea of light and love and grace so inherent in man, but which rigorous circumstance had compelled Dempsey to banish from his life.

Dempsey had had a mother to support for many years, and had found it impossible to economize. But since her death he had laid by about a hundred and fifty pounds; he thought of this money with awe, and, awed by his good fortune, he thought how much more he might save before he was forced to leave his employment; and to have touched a penny of his savings would have seemed to him a sin near to sacrilege. Yet he did not hesitate for a single moment to send Henrietta Brown, whose address he had been able to obtain through the bank books, a diamond brooch which had cost twenty pounds. He

omitted to say whence it had come, and for days he lived in a warm wonderment, satisfied in the thought that she was wearing something that he had seen and touched.

His ideal was now by him and always, and its dominion was so complete that he neglected his duties at the bank, and was censured by the amazed manager. The change of his condition was so obvious that it became the subject for gossip, and jokes were now beginning to pass into serious conjecturing. Dempsey took no notice, and his plans matured amid jokes and theories. The desire to write and reveal himself to his beloved had become imperative; and after some very slight hesitation—for he was moved more by instinct than by reason—he wrote a letter urging the fatality of the circumstances that separated them, and explaining rather than excusing this revelation of his identity. His letter was full of deference, but at the same time it left no doubt as to the nature of his attachments and hopes. The answer to this letter was a polite note begging him not to persist in this correspondence, and warning him that if he did it would become necessary to write to the manager of the bank. But the return of his brooch did not dissuade Dempsey from the pursuit of his ideal; and as time went by it became more and more impossible for him to refrain from writing love-letters and sending occasional presents of jewellery. When the letters and jewellery were returned to him he put them away carelessly, and he bought the first sparkle of diamonds that caught his fancy, and forwarded ring, bracelet, and ear-ring, with whatever words of rapturous love that came up in his mind.

One day he was called into the manager's room, severely reprimanded, and eventually pardoned in consideration of his long and faithful services. But the reprimands of his employers were of no use, and he continued to write to Henrietta Brown, growing more and more careless of his secret, dropping brooches about the office,

and letters. At last the story was whispered from desk to desk. Dempsey's dismissal was the only course open to the firm; and it was with much regret that the partners told their old servant that his services were no longer required.

To their surprise Dempsey seemed quite unaffected by his dismissal; he even seemed relieved, and left the bank smiling, thinking of Henrietta, bestowing no thought on his want of means. He did not even think of providing himself with money by the sale of some of the jewellery he had about him, nor of going to his lodging and packing up his clothes, he did not think how he should get to Edinburgh—it was there that she lived. He thought of her even to the exclusion of the simplest means of reaching her, and was content to walk about the fields in happy mood, watching for glimpses of some evanescent phantom at the wood's edge wearing a star on her forehead, or catching sight in the wood's depths of a glistening shoulder and feet flying towards the reeds. Full of happy aspiration he wandered, seeking the country through the many straggling villages that hang like children round the skirts of Dublin, and passing through one of these at nightfall, and, feeling tired, he turned into the bar of an inn, and asked for a bit to eat.

"You look as if you come a long way, Mister."

"I have come a good twenty miles, and I'll have to go a good few more before I reach Edinburgh."

"And what might you be going to Edinburgh for—if you'll excuse me asking?"

"I am going to the lady I love, and I am taking her beautiful presents of jewellery."

The two rough fellows exchanged glances; and it is easy to imagine how Dempsey was induced to let them have his diamonds, so that inquiries might be made of a friend round the corner regarding their value. After waiting a little while, Dempsey paid for his bread and

cheese, and went in search of the thieves. But the face of Henrietta Brown obliterated all remembrance of thieves and diamonds, and he wandered for a few days, sustained by his dream and the crusts that his appearance drew from the pitiful. At last he even neglected to ask for a crust, and, foodless, followed the beckoning vision, from sunrise to sundown.

It was a soft, quiet summer's night when Dempsey lay down to sleep for the last time. He was very tired, he had been wandering all day, and threw himself on the grass by the roadside. He lay there looking up at the stars, thinking of Henrietta, knowing that everything was slipping away, and he passing into a diviner sense. Henrietta seemed to be coming nearer to him and revealing herself more clearly; and when the word of death was in his throat, and his eyes opened for the last time, it seemed to him that one of the stars came down from the sky and laid its bright face upon his shoulder.

ALMS-GIVING

AS I searched for a penny it began to rain. The blind man opened a parcel, and I saw that it contained a small tarpaulin cape. But the several coats I wore made it difficult to find my change; I thought I had better forego my charity that day, and walked quickly away.

"Eight or nine hours a day waiting for alms is his earthly lot," I said, and walking towards the river, and leaning on the parapet, I wondered if he recognized the passing steps—if he recognized my steps—and associated them with a penny. Of what use that he should know the different steps? If he knew them there would be anticipation and disappointments. But a dog would make life comprehensible, and I imagined a companionship, a mingling of muteness and blindness, and the joy that would brighten the darkness when the dog leaped eagerly upon the blind man's knees. I imagined the joy of warm feet and limb, and the sudden poke of the muzzle. A dog would be a link to bind the blind beggar to the friendship of life. Now why has this small blind man, with a face as pale as a plant that never sees the sun, not a dog? A dog is the natural link, and the only link, that binds the blind beggar to the friendship of life.

Looking round, I could see that he was taking off his little cape, for it had ceased raining. But in a few weeks it would rain every day, and the wind would blow from the river in great gusts. "Will he brave another winter?" I asked myself. "Iron blasts will sweep through the passage; they will find him through the torn shirt and the poor grey trousers, the torn waistcoat, the black jacket, and the thread-bare overcoat—someone's cast-off

garment. But he may have been born blind, or he may have become blind; in any case he has been blind for many years, and if he persists in living he will have to brave many winters in that passage, for he is not an old man. What instinct compels him to bear his dark life? Is he afraid to kill himself? Does this fear spring from physical or from religious motives? Fear of hell? Surely no other motive would enable him to endure his life."

In my intolerance for all life but my own I thought I could estimate the value of the Great Mockery, and I asked myself angrily why he persisted in living. I asked myself why I helped him to live. It would be better that he should throw himself at once into the river. And this was reason talking to me, and it told me that the most charitable act I could do would be to help him over the parapet. But behind reason there is instinct, and in obedience to an impulse, which I could not weigh or appreciate, I went to the blind man and put money into his hand; the small coin clipped through his fingers; they were so cold that he could not retain it, and I had to pick it from the ground.

"Thankee, sir. Can you tell, sir, what time it is?"

This little question was my recompense. He and I wanted to know the time of day. I asked him why he wanted to know the time, and he told me because that evening a friend was coming to fetch him. And, wondering who that friend might be, and hoping he might tell me, I asked him about his case of pencils, expressing a hope that he sold them. He answered that he was doing a nice bit of trading.

"The boys about here are a trouble," he said, "but the policeman on the beat is a friend of mine, and he watches them and makes them count the pencils they take. The other day they robbed me, and he gave them such a cuffing that I don't think they'll take my pencils again. You see, sir, I keep the money I take for the pencils in the left

pocket, and the money that is given to me I keep in the right pocket. In this way I know if my accounts are right when I make them up in the evening."

Now where, in what lonely room, does he sit making up his accounts? But, not wishing to seem inquisitorial, I turned the conversation.

"I suppose you know some of the passers-by."

"Yes, I know a tidy few. There's one gentleman who gives me a penny every day, but he's gone abroad, I hear, and sixpence a week is a big drop."

As I had given him a penny a day all the summer, I assumed he was speaking of me. And my sixpence a week meant a day's dinner, perhaps two days' dinner! It was only necessary for me to withhold my charity to give him ease. He would hardly be able to live without my charity, and if one of his other patrons were to do likewise the world would be freed from a life that I could not feel to be of any value.

So do we judge the world if we rely on our reason, but instinct clings like a child and begs like a child, and my instinct begged me to succour this poor man, to give him a penny every day, to find out what his condition was, and to stop for a chat every time I gave him my penny. I had obeyed my instinct all the summer, and now reason had intervened, reason was in rebellion, and for a long time I avoided, or seemed to avoid, the passage where the blind man sat for eight or nine hours, glad to receive, but never asking for alms.

I think I forgot the blind man for several months. I only remembered him when I was sitting at home, or when I was at the other side of the town, and sometimes I thought I made myself little excuses not to pass through the passage. Our motives are vague, complex, and many, and one is never quite sure why one does a thing, and if I were to say that I did not give the blind man pennies that winter because I believed it better to deprive him of

his means of livelihood and force him out of life than to help him to remain in life and suffer, I should be saying what was certainly untrue, yet the idea was in my mind, and I experienced more than one twinge of conscience when I passed through the passage. I experienced remorse when I hurried past him, too selfish to unbutton my coat, for every time I happened to pass him it was raining or blowing very hard, and every time I hurried away trying to find reasons why he bore his miserable life. I hurried to my business, my head full of chatter about St. Simon Stylites, telling myself that he saw God far away at the end of the sky, His immortal hands filled with immortal recompenses; reason chattered about the compensation of celestial choirs, but instinct told me that the blind man standing in the stone passage knew of no such miraculous consolations.

As the winter advanced, as the winds grew harsher, my avoidance of the passage grew more marked, and one day I stopped to think, and ask myself why I avoided it.

There was a faint warmth in the sky, and I heard my heart speaking quite distinctly, and it said:

"Go to the blind man—what matter about your ten minutes' delay; you have been unhappy since you refrained from alms-giving, and the blind beggar can feel the new year beginning."

"You see, sir, I have added some shirt buttons and studs to the pencils. I don't know how they will go, but one never knows till one tries."

Then he told me it was smallpox that destroyed his eyes, and he was only eighteen at the time.

"You must have suffered very much when they told you your sight was going?"

"Yes, sir. I had the hump for six weeks."

"What do you mean?"

"It doubled me up, that it did. I sat with my head in my hands for six weeks."

"And after that?"

"I didn't think any more about it—what was the good?"

"Yes, but it must be difficult not to think, sitting here all alone."

"One mustn't allow oneself to give way. One would break down altogether if one did. I've some friends, and in the evening I get plenty of exercise."

"What do you do in the evenings?"

"I turn a hay-cutting machine in a stable."

"And you're quite contented?"

"I don't think, sir, a happier man than I passes through this gateway once a month."

He told me his little boy came to fetch him in the evening.

"You're married?"

"Yes, sir, and I've got four children. They're going away for their holidays next week."

"Where are they going?"

"To the sea. It will do them good; a blow on the beach will do them a power of good."

"And when they come back they will tell you about it?"

"Yes."

"And do you ever go away for a holiday?"

"Last year I went with a policeman. A gentleman who passes this way, one of my friends, paid four shillings for me. We had a nice dinner in a public-house for a shilling, and then we went for a walk."

"And this year are you going with the policeman?"

"I hope so, a friend of mine gave me half-a-crown towards it."

"I'll give you the rest."

"Thankee, sir."

A soft wind was blowing, and an instinct as soft and as gentle filled my heart, and I went towards some trees.

The new leaves were beginning in the high branches. I was sitting where sparrows were building their nests, and very soon I seemed to see farther into life than I had ever seen before. " We're here," I said, " for the purpose of learning what life is, and the blind beggar has taught me a great deal, something that I could not have learnt out of a book, a deeper truth than any book contains. . . . " And then I ceased to think, for thinking is a folly when a soft south wind is blowing and an instinct as soft and as gentle fills the heart.

SO ON HE FARES

HIS mother had forbidden him to stray about the roads and, standing at the garden gate, little Ulick Burke often thought he would like to run down to the canal and watch the boats passing. His father used to take him for walks along the towing path, but his father had gone away to the wars two years ago, and standing by the garden gate he remembered how his father used to stop to talk to the lock-keepers. Their talk turned often upon the canal and its business, and Ulick remembered that the canal ended in the Shannon, and that the barges met ships coming up from the sea.

He was a pretty child with bright blue eyes, soft curls, and a shy winning manner, and he stood at the garden gate thinking how the boats rose up in the locks, how the gate opened and let the boats free, and he wondered if his father had gone away to the war in one of the barges. He felt sure if he were going away to the war he would go in a barge. And he wondered if the barge went as far as the war or only as far as the Shannon. He would like to ask his mother, but she would say he was troubling her with foolish questions, or she would begin to think again that he wanted to run away from home. He wondered if he were to hide himself in one of the barges whether it would take him to a battlefield where he would meet his father walking about with a gun upon his shoulder.

And leaning against the gate-post, he swung one foot across the other, though he had been told by his mother that he was like one of the village children when he did it.

But his mother was always telling him not to do something, and he could not remember everything he must not do. He had been told not to go to the canal lest he should fall in, nor into the field lest he should tear his trousers. He had been told he must not run about in the garden lest he should tread on the flowers, and his mother was always telling him he was not to talk to the school children as they came back from school, though he did not want to talk to them. There was a time when he would have liked to talk to them: now he ran to the other side of the garden when they were coming home from school; but there was no place in the garden where he could hide himself from them, unless he got into the dry ditch. The school children were very naughty children; they climbed up the bank, and, holding on to the paling, they mocked at him; and their mockery was to ask him the way to "Hill Cottage"; for his mother had had the name painted on the gate, and no one else in the parish had given their cottage a name.

However, he liked the dry ditch, and under the branches, where the wren had built her nest, Ulick was out of his mother's way, and out of the way of the boys; and lying among the dead leaves he could think of the barges floating away, and of his tall father who wore a red coat and let him pull his moustache. He was content to lie in the ditch for hours, thinking he was a bargeman and that he would like to use a sail. His father had told him that the boats had sails on the Shannon—if so it would be easy to sail to the war; and, breaking off in the middle of some wonderful war adventure, some tale about his father and his father's soldiers, he would grow interested in the life of the ditch, in the coming and going of the wren, in the chirrup of a bird in the tall larches that grew beyond the paling.

Beyond the paling there was a wood full of moss-grown stones and trees overgrown with ivy, and Ulick

thought that if he only dared to get over the paling and face the darkness of the hollow on the other side of the paling, he could run across the meadow and call from the bank to a steersman. The steersman might take him away! But he was afraid his mother might follow him on the next barge, and he dreamed a story of barges drawn by the swiftest horses in Ireland.

But dreams are but a makeshift life. He was very unhappy, and though he knew it was wrong he could not help laying plans for escape. Sometimes he thought that the best plan would be to set fire to the house; for while his mother was carrying pails of water from the back-yard, he would run away; but he did not dare to think out his plan of setting fire to the house, lest one of the spirits which dwelt in the hollow beyond the paling should come and drag him down a hole.

One day he forgot to hide himself in the ditch, and the big boy climbed up the bank, and asked him to give him some gooseberries, and though Ulick would have feared to gather gooseberries for himself, he did not like to refuse the boy, and he gave him some, hoping that the big boy would not laugh at him again. And they became friends, and very soon he was friends with them all, and they had many talks clustered in the corner, the children holding on to the palings, and Ulick hiding behind the hollyhocks ready to warn them.

"It's all right, she's gone to the village," Ulick said. One day the big boy asked him to come with them; they were going to spear eels in the brook, and he was emboldened to get over the fence, and to follow across the meadow, through the hazels, and very soon it seemed to him that they had wandered to the world's end. At last they came to the brook and the big boy turned up his trousers, and Ulick saw him lifting the stones with his left hand and plunging a fork into the water with his right. When he brought up a struggling eel at the end

of the fork, Ulick clapped his hands and laughed, and he had never been so happy in his life before.

After a time there were no more stones to raise, and sitting on the bank they began to tell stories. His companions asked him when his father was coming back from the wars, and he told them how his father used to take him for walks up the canal, and how they used to meet a man who had a tame rat in his pocket. Suddenly the boys and girls started up, crying, "Here's the farmer," and they ran wildly across the fields. However, they got to the highroad long before the farmer could catch them, and his escape enchanted Ulick. Then the children went their different ways, the big boy staying with Ulick, who thought he must offer him some gooseberries. So they crossed the fence together and crouched under the bushes, and ate the gooseberries till they wearied of them. Afterwards they went to look at the bees, and while looking at the insects crawling in and out of their little door, Ulick caught sight of his mother, and she coming towards them. Ulick cried out, but the big boy was caught before he could reach the fence, and Ulick saw that, big as the boy was, he could not save himself from a slapping. He kicked out, and then blubbered, and at last got away. In a moment it would be Ulick's turn, and he feared she would beat him more than she had beaten the boy, for she hated him, whereas she was only vexed with the boy; she would give him bread and water; he had often had a beating and bread and water for lesser wickedness than the bringing of one of the village boys into the garden to eat gooseberries.

He put up his right hand and saved his right cheek, and then she tried to slap him on the left, but he put up his left hand, and this went on until she grew so angry that Ulick thought he had better allow her to slap him, for if she did not slap him at once she might kill him.

"Down with your hands, sir, down with your hands,

sir," she cried, but before he had time to let her slap him, she said, " I will give you enough of bees," and she caught one that had just rested on a flower and put it down his neck. The bee stung him in the neck where the flesh is softest, and he ran away screaming, unable to rid himself of the bee. He broke through the hedges of sweet pea, and he dashed through the poppies, trampling through the flower beds, until he reached the dry ditch.

There is something frightful in feeling a stinging insect in one's back, and Ulick lay in the dry ditch, rolling among the leaves in anguish. He thought he was stung all over; he heard his mother laughing and she called him a coward through an opening in the bushes, but he knew she could not follow him down the ditch. His neck had already begun to swell, but he forgot the pain of the sting in hatred. He felt he must hate his mother, however wicked it might be to do so. His mother had often slapped him; he had heard of boys being slapped, but no one had ever put a bee down a boy's back before; he felt he must always hate her, and creeping up through the brambles to where he could get a view of the garden, he waited until he saw her walk up the path into the house; and then, stealing back to the bottom of the ditch, he resolved to get over the paling. A few minutes after he heard her calling him, and then he climbed the paling, and he crossed the dreaded hollow, stumbling over the old stones.

As he crossed the meadow he caught sight of a boat coming through the lock, but the lock-keeper knew him by sight, and would tell the bargeman where he came from, and he would be sent home to his mother. He ran on, trying to get ahead of the boat, creeping through hedges, frightened lest he should not be able to find the canal! Now he stopped, sure that he had lost it; his brain seemed to be giving way, and he ran like a mad child up the bank. Oh, what joy! The canal flowed

underneath the bank. The horse had just passed, the barge was coming, and Ulick ran down the bank calling to the bargeman. He plunged into the water, getting through the bulrushes. Half of the barge had passed him, and he held out his hands. The ground gave way and he went under the water; green light took the place of day, and when he struggled to the surface he saw the rudder moving. He went under again, and remembered no more until he opened his eyes and saw the bargeman leaning over him.

"Now, what ails you to be throwing yourself into the water in that way?"

Ulick closed his eyes; he had no strength for answering him, and a little while after he heard someone come on board the barge, and he guessed it must be the man who drove the horse. He lay with his eyes closed, hearing the men talking of what they should do with him. He heard a third voice, and guessed it must be a man come up from the cabin. This man said it would be better to take him back to the last lock, and they began to argue about who should carry him. Ulick was terribly frightened, and he was just going to beg of them not to bring him back when he heard one of them say, "It will be easier to leave him at the next lock." Soon after, he felt the boat start again, and when Ulick opened his eyes, he saw hedges gliding past, and he hoped the next lock was a long way off.

"Now," said the steersman, "since you are awaking out of your faint, you'll be telling us where you come from, because we want to send you home again."

"Oh," he said, "from a long way off, the Shannon."

"The Shannon!" said the bargeman. "Why, that is more than seventy miles away. How did you come up here?"

It was a dreadful moment. Ulick knew he must give some good answer or he would find himself in his mother's

keeping very soon. But what answer was he to give? It was half accident, half cunning that made him speak of the Shannon. The steersman said again, "The Shannon is seventy miles away, how did you get up here?" and by this time Ulick was aware that he must make the bargemen believe he had hidden himself on one of the boats coming up from the Shannon, and that he had given the bargeman some money, and then he burst into tears and told them he had been very unhappy at home; and when they asked him why he had been unhappy, he did not answer, but he promised he would not be a naughty boy any more if they would take him back to the Shannon. He would be a good boy and not run away again. His pretty face and speech persuaded the bargemen to bring him back to the Shannon; it was decided to say nothing about him to the lock-keeper, and he was carried down to the cabin. He had often asked his father if he might see the bargeman's cabin; and his father had promised him that the next time they went to the canal he should go on board a barge and see the cabin; but his father had gone away to the wars. Now he was in the bargeman's cabin, and he wondered if they were going to give him supper and if he would be a bargeman himself when he grew up to be a man.

Some miles farther the boat bumped the edge of the bridge, and on the other side of the bridge there was the lock, and he heard the lock gate shut behind the boat and the water pour into the lock; the lock seemed a long time filling, and he was frightened lest the lockman might come down to the cabin, for there was no place where he could hide.

After passing through the lock one of the men came down to see him, and he was taken on deck, and in the calm of the evening Ulick came to look upon the bargemen as his good angels. They gave him some of their supper, and when they arrived at the next lock they made

their beds on the deck, the night being so warm. It seemed to Ulick that he had never seen the night before, and he watched the sunset fading streak by streak, and imagined he was the captain of a ship sailing in the Shannon. The stars were so bright that he could not sleep, and it amused him to make up a long story about the bargemen snoring by his side. The story ended with the sunset and then the night was blue all over, and raising himself out of his blanket he watched the moonlight rippling down the canal. Then the night grew grey. He began to feel very cold, and wrapped himself in his blanket tightly, and the world got so white that Ulick grew afraid, and he was not certain whether it would not be better to escape from the boat and run away while everybody slept.

He lay awake maturing his little plan, seeing the greyness pass away and the sky fill up with pink and fleecy clouds.

One of the men roused, and, without saying a word, went to fetch a horse from the stables, and another went to boil the kettle in the cabin, and Ulick asked if he might help him; and while he blew the fire he heard the water running into the lock, and thought what a fool they were making of the lock-keeper, and when the boat was well on its way towards the next lock the steersman called him to come up, and they breakfasted together. Ulick would have wished this life to go on for ever, but the following day the steersman said:

"There is only one lock more between this and our last stopping-place. Keep a lookout for your mother's cottage."

He promised he would, and he beguiled them all the evening with pretended discoveries. That cabin was his mother's cabin. No, it was farther on, he remembered those willow-trees. Ulick's object was to get as far away

from his home as possible; to get as near to the Shannon as he could.

"There's not a mile between us and the Shannon now," said the steersman. "I believe you've been telling us a lot of lies, my young man."

Ulick said his mother lived just outside the town, they would see the house when they passed through the last lock, and he planned to escape that night, and about an hour before the dawn he got up, and, glancing at the sleeping men, he stepped ashore and ran until he felt very tired. And when he could go no farther he lay down in the hay in an outhouse.

A woman found him in the hay some hours after, and he told her his story, and as the woman seemed very kind he laid some stress on his mother's cruelty. He mentioned that his mother had put a bee down his neck, and bending down his head he showed her where the bee had stung him. She stroked his pretty curls and looked into his blue eyes, and she said that anyone who could put a bee down a boy's neck must be a she-devil.

She was a lone widow longing for someone to look after, and in a very short time Ulick was as much loved by his chance mother as he had been hated by his real mother.

Three years afterwards she died, and Ulick had to leave the cottage.

He was now a little over thirteen, and knew the ships and their sailors, and he went away in one of the ships that came up the river, and sailed many times round the coast of Ireland, and up all the harbours of Ireland. He led a wild, rough life, and his flight from home was remembered like a tale heard in infancy, until one day, as he was steering his ship up the Shannon, a desire to see what they were doing at home came over him. The ship dropped anchor, and he went to the canal to watch the boats going home. And it was not long before he

was asking one of the bargemen if he would take him on board. He knew what the rules were, and he knew they could be broken, and how, and he said if they would take him he would be careful the lockmen did not see him, and the journey began.

The month was July, so the days were as endless and the country was as green and as full of grass as they were when he had come down the canal, and the horse strained along the path, sticking his toes into it just as he had done ten years ago; and when they came to a dangerous place Ulick saw the man who was driving the horse take hold of his tail, just as he had seen him do ten years ago.

"I think those are the rushes, only there are no trees, and the bank doesn't seem so high." And then he said as the bargeman was going to stop his horse, "No, I am wrong. It isn't there."

They went on a few miles farther, and the same thing happened again. At last he said, "Now I am sure it is there."

And the bargeman called to the man who was driving the horse and stopped him, and Ulick jumped from the boat to the bank.

"That was a big leap you took," said a small boy who was standing on the bank. "It is well you didn't fall in."

"Why did you say that?" said Ulick, "is your mother telling you not to go down to the canal?"

"Look at the frog! he's going to jump into the water," said the little boy.

He was the same age as Ulick was when Ulick ran away, and he was dressed in the same little trousers and little boots and socks, and he had a little grey cap. Ulick's hair had grown darker now, but it had been as fair and as curly as this little boy's, and he asked him if his mother forbade him to go down to the canal.

"Are you a bargeman? Do you steer the barge or do you drive the horse?"

"I'll tell you about the barge if you'll tell me about your mother. Does she tell you not to come down to the canal?"

The boy turned away his head and nodded it.

"Does she beat you if she catches you here?"

"Oh, no, mother never beats me."

"Is she kind to you?"

"Yes, she's very kind, she lives up there, and there's a garden to our cottage, and the name 'Hill Cottage' is painted up on the gate-post."

"Now," said Ulick, "tell me your name."

"My name is Ulick."

"Ulick! And what's your other name?"

"Ulick Burke."

"Ulick Burke!" said the big Ulick. "Well, my name is the same. And I used to live at Hill Cottage, too."

The boy did not answer.

"Whom do you live with?"

"I live with mother."

"And what's her name?"

"Well, Burke is her name," said the boy.

"But her front name?"

"Catherine."

"And where's your father?"

"Oh, father's a soldier; he's away."

"But my father was a soldier too, and I used to live in that cottage."

"And where have you been ever since?"

"Oh," he said, "I've been a sailor. I think I will go in the cottage with you."

"Yes," said little Ulick, "come up and see mother, and you'll tell me where you've been sailing," and he put his hand into the seafarer's.

And now the seafarer began to lose his reckoning; the compass no longer pointed north. He had been away for ten years, and coming back he had found his own self,

the self that had jumped into the water at this place ten years ago. Why had not the little boy done as he had done, and been pulled into the barge and gone away? If this had happened Ulick would have believed he was dreaming or that he was mad. But the little boy was leading him, yes, he remembered the way, there was the cottage, and its paling, and its hollyhocks. And there was his mother coming out of the house, and very little changed.

"Ulick, where have you been? Oh, you naughty boy," and she caught the little boy up and kissed him. And so engrossed was her attention in her little son that she had not noticed the man he had brought home with him.

"Now, who is this?" she said.

"Oh, mother, he jumped from the boat to the bank, and he will tell you, mother, that I was not near the bank."

"Yes, mother, he was ten yards from the bank; and now tell me, do you think you ever saw me before? . . ."

She looked at him.

"Oh, it's you! Why we thought you were drowned."

"I was picked up by a bargeman."

"Well, come into the house and tell us what you've been doing."

"I've been seafaring," he said, taking a chair. "But what about this Ulick?"

"He's your brother, that's all."

His mother asked him of what he was thinking, and Ulick told her how greatly astonished he had been to find a little boy exactly like himself, waiting at the same place.

"And father?"

"Your father is away."

"So," he said, "this little boy is my brother. I should like to see father. When is he coming back?"

"Oh," she said, "he won't be back for another three years. He enlisted again."

"Mother," said Ulick, "you don't seem very glad to see me."

"I shall never forget the evening we spent when you threw yourself into the canal. You were a wicked child."

"And why did you think I was drowned?"

"Well, your cap was picked up in the bulrushes."

He thought that whatever wickedness he had been guilty of might have been forgiven, and he began to feel that if he had known how his mother would receive him he would not have come home.

"Well, the dinner is nearly ready. You'll stay and have some with us, and we can make you up a bed in the kitchen."

He could see that his mother wished to welcome him, but her heart was set against him now as it had always been. Her dislike had survived ten years of absence. He had gone away and had met with a mother who loved him, and had done ten years' hard seafaring. He had forgotten his real mother—forgotten everything except the bee and the hatred that gathered in her eyes when she put it down his back; and that same ugly look he could now see gathering in her eyes, and it grew deeper every hour he remained in the cottage. His little brother asked him to tell him tales about the sailing ships, and he wanted to go down to the canal with Ulick, but their mother said he was to bide here with her. The day had begun to decline, his brother was crying, and he had to tell him a sea-story to stop his crying. "But mother hates to hear my voice," he said to himself, and he went out in the garden when the story was done. It would be better to go away, and he took one turn round the garden and got over the paling at the end of the dry ditch, at the place he had got over it before, and he walked through the old wood, where the trees were overgrown with ivy, and the stones with moss. In this second experience there was neither terror nor mystery—only bitterness. It seemed to him

a pity that he had ever been taken out of the canal, and he thought how easy it would be to throw himself in again, but only children drown themselves because their mothers do not love them; life had taken a hold upon him, and he stood watching the canal, though not waiting for a boat. But when a boat appeared he called to the man who was driving the horse to stop, for it was the same boat that had brought him from the Shannon.

"Well, was it all right?" the steersman said. "Did you find the house? How were they at home?"

"They're all right at home," he said; "but father is still away. I am going back. Can you take me?"

The evening sky opened calm and benedictive, and the green country flowed on, the boat passed by ruins, castles and churches, and every day was alike until they reached the Shannon.

THE WILD GOOSE

CHAP. I.

HE remembered a green, undulating country out of which the trees seemed to emerge like vapours, and a line of pearl-coloured mountains showing above the horizon on fine days. And this was all. But this slight colour-memory had followed him all through his wanderings. His parents had emigrated to Manchester when he was nine, and when he was sixteen he felt that he must escape from Manchester, from the overwhelming dreariness of the brick chimneys and their smoke cloud. He had joined a travelling circus on its way to the Continent, and he crossed with it from Newhaven to Dieppe in charge of the lions. The circus crossed in a great storm; Ned was not able to get about, and the tossing of the vessel closed the ventilating slides, and when they arrived at Dieppe the finest lion was dead.

"Well, there are other things in life besides looking after lions," he said, and, taking up his fiddle, he became interested in it. He played it all the way across the Atlantic, and everybody said there was no reason why he should not play in the Opera House. But an interview with the conductor dispelled some illusions, and when he learnt what would be required of him, he began to lose interest in his musical career. As he stood jingling his pence on the steps of the Opera House he saw a man go by who had come over with him, and at the end of five minutes' talk Ned was asked if he could draw a map according to scale. It would profit him nothing to say no; he had drawn maps in school. A bargain was

struck. He was to get ten pounds for his map. He ordered a table, pinned out the paper, and the map was finished in a fortnight—a map of a certain mining district; and, having nothing to do when it was finished, he thought he would like to see the mine; the owners encouraged him to go there. He did some mining in the morning, in the evening he played his fiddle, and eventually became a journalist.

He wandered and wrote and wandered again, until one day, finding himself in New York, he signed an agreement to edit a paper; but he soon wearied of expressing the same opinions, and as the newspaper could not change its opinions, Ned volunteered to go to Cuba and write about the insurgents. His articles were inflammatory of course, he being an Irishman; and as soon as America declared war against the Spaniards, being an Irishman he enlisted, and fought so well that he might have become a General if the war had lasted.

But it was over, and, overpowered by an extraordinary dislike to New York, he felt he must travel. He wanted to see Europe again, and remembering the green plain of Meath, he said: "I'll go to Ireland."

His father and mother were dead, and without a thought of his relatives, he read of Ireland and her Kings out of a book from the library. The book often dropped off his knee, and he fell to thinking of the green hill of Tara. He had been born not far from Tara, and might as well begin to see Ireland from Tara as elsewhere.

But two more days would have to pass away before the coast would begin to appear, and, bewitched by memories, he walked up and down the deck whistling "The Harp that Rang Through Tara's Halls"; and so beautifully did he whistle the tune that it seemed to the passengers on board the steamer as if they had never heard it before. He began to remember the old airs,

bringing them out one after the other, discovering them phrase by phrase, and often going over a tune a dozen times in search of a single note, but getting it in the end; and when he stepped out of the train at Kilmessen no song seemed so appropriate to the occasion as "The Harp that Rang," but nobody seemed to recognize the air at the station, nor on the road to the village, nor in the village.

"They do not seem to recognize their own tunes," he muttered to himself. But every man and woman he passed was interested in him; every man and woman he passed admired his braided coat and the folds into which his trousers seemed to drift quite naturally. Every woman said in her heart, "He is very good-looking," pondered on his nose, for it was fine and straight and thin, and still more did his moustache, a frizzle of gold, captivate them; and they liked his eyes, for they were full of smiles, and there was a caress in his voice when he asked the women to direct him. Both sexes were conscious of it as an affectation, but this did not detract from his charm, but on the contrary it seemed to add to it.

"Yes, sir," the woman answered him eagerly; "if you follow the path it will lead you to the top of the hill."

And he passed on, nodding to the cottagers as he passed them, bidding them the time of day in the very manner of the country, which he had already caught although this was only his second day in Ireland, daring already to reprove them for not having any Irish; he would have liked to have heard the Irish language for the first time on Tara's hill; but as if to recompense him for the absence of the language, the half-tipsy Squire, lounging on the worn hillside with his bailiffs, withstood his right of way, only allowing him to pass when they discovered him to be an American by his accent, and not a rascally Dublin journalist come down to deny

the Squire's right to dig up a monument and throw it into the sea if he were so inclined.

"A monument," Ned said to himself, looking round for King Cormac's statue, and seeing it nowhere; but feeling the moment was not one for verbal criticism, he listened deferentially to the Squire's drunken utterances, and with some success, for in about two minutes he had fully grasped the fact that certain patriots and journalists were getting up an action against the Squire to prevent him and a friend from excavating the Rath of the Hostages, though they had proved that the Ark of the Covenant would be found there.

"The Ark of the Covenant!" Ned repeated, unable to believe his ears.

"Yes, the Ark of the Covenant," the Squire re-repeated, "we're digging for it."

In a moment after Ned was forced to believe his eyes, for before him was a great trench some five-and-twenty feet deep, with six men throwing up earth out of it.

"A subject for an article, digging for the Ark of the Covenant on Tara's hills," he said; and he listened to the Squire trying to tell how the Ark of the Covenant had come to Tara. But the Squire had had too much whisky to tell any story, and it was his friend who volunteered to tell that the Ark had been taken to Egypt by the grandson of the prophet Jeremiah, where it had lain for many years in the possession of Egyptian princesses, one of whom married an Iberian chieftain—a man who, though a pagan, was possessed by the instinct of Christianity. Ned wondered what the Ark of the Covenant had to do with Christianity, but he did not press the point, preferring to listen to the tale of the Iberian chieftain who had voyaged round the Mediterranean hugging the shore, bringing the great treasure through the Straits of Gibraltar, along the coasts of Spain and France. He noticed that the Squire listened

to his tenant's tale approvingly, and then, as if to give further point to it, the Squire informed Ned that his friend was a great sausage-maker in Limerick, who had worked for half a century accumulating money, sustained always by the hope that by the end of his life he would go to Tara and discover the Ark.

"A wonderful slice of human nature is this drunken Squire and his friend the sausage-maker," Ned said to himself, and turning to the sausage-maker he learnt that the legend of the burial of the Ark of the Covenant in Tara was one of the oldest of Ireland's stories.

"Godfrey Keating mentions it," the sausage-maker interjected, and the men walked on together, Ned listening to them amused, for the story seemed to represent to him in some strange way the genius of the Irish people. He could not tell how or why, but he recognized Ireland and himself in the tale—if not his present self, at all events some far-distant self.

"My present self is but a sort of echo of the tale," he thought, feeling the word "echo" to be as near to his meaning as any he could find that morning.

"And perhaps," he said, "this is the very stream," looking towards the stream that flowed from the well, "of the Neamhtach or Pearly which Grania crossed when she fled from Tara with Diarmuid, leaving her father, King Cormac, Finn, and his warriors asleep." All had drunk of the drugged wine except Diarmuid, Caoelte and Usheen. For the old story-teller, Ned reflected, was never minded to tell a sentimental story, but stories of fated love that ended always in death. Diarmuid and Grania was the most terrible he had ever told. She appears from the first like a sort of luminous poison, a phosphorescent light spreading outwards, circles widening ever. The wine is not drugged at Tara for true love, for she burns as much for Caoelte and Usheen as for Diarmuid; and the story-teller gives us to under-

stand that Diarmuid, too, would have refused to break his oath of fealty to Finn if Grania had not put bonds upon him. For seven years Finn followed them along Ireland and across Ireland. As long as there were portents of danger and disaster she was happy; but when Finn tired of pursuit, and Diarmuid settled down to sheep-farming in Connaught, she wearied of him and never let him have any peace till he sent for Finn. The old story-teller seemed to have always kept before him the fact that Diarmuid was a delightful caprice of her blood, for when crossing a stream—perhaps this stream—she had said, speaking of the water that had wetted her legs, "You are a great warrior, Diarmuid, but this water is braver than you." And wondering if the bailiffs knew this very pretty folk-invention, and they living on the spot, Ned told the story to the Squire, who said:

"It was there he made a woman of her." And on the spur of the moment invented many ribald jokes, till one of his men, seeing that Ned was annoyed at the master, whispered confidentially that it was not in this stream that Grania had made a mock of Diarmuid, but in a river two days' journey from Tara.

"You are telling the story wrong," the Squire chuckled. "It was in Connaught that he tupped her . . . a barren ewe always hanging after the ram."

"One that would be better out of the flock!" a bailiff chimed in.

"A later and a corrupt version of the story," replied Ned, and his eyes wandered from field to field contrasting the pale green of the grass with the dark green of the hedges. "All my cherished memory of Ireland!" he said. "Trees emerging like vapours, and the same green flowing on always the same, with far away a line of dim hills visible on fine days.

"The Garden of Eden," he added, "full of happy herds, and nowhere a curl of smoke from a cottage

chimney. How much more beautiful the world is without man! But is that certain? Was it not man that made the world that we admire? And is it not true that soon after his disappearance the water in the choked brooks will overflow and lie stagnant in the fields and briars run out from the hedges; without man the world would become God's wilderness again, and the happy herds that we eat would find no grass anywhere, only scrub. We give them grass, and only ask beefsteak in return."

At that moment his thoughts were interrupted by one of the bailiffs.

"This stream, sir, is the one that turned the first water-mill in Ireland, and it was put up by King Cormac to save a beautiful bondmaid from toiling at the quern."

"A very proper thing to do," he answered, and, fearing further coarse jests from the Squire, he turned the talk without difficulty from women to drink, the day being hot; and the Squire and his attendant apparitors strolled down the hillside towards the inn, the bailiffs entertaining Ned with the enumeration of the different historic places in Meath which they would wish him to visit—there were the Druid's shrines of Douth and New Grange.

"Only a lot of old stones," interjected the Squire, "not worth your while to look at, and both twenty miles from here," he added, as though he were set on turning Ned from visiting them.

"I think I should like to see them. But twenty miles is a long way on a hot day," Ned answered.

"You mustn't be thinking of walking it, sir, for you wouldn't be getting there before nightfall, and sorra a bed in the place for you. You must go back to Dublin."

"Mr. O'Flynn is telling yer right," whispered one of the bailiffs. "Go back to Dublin and start from there, and don't be minding what the master says. It's

only his talk—he'd be sorry enough if you was to lave the country without seeing them."

CHAP. II.

NEXT day Ned was on his hands and knees crawling through the narrow passage out of the hollow hill of New Grange. And while eating his noonday meal among the thorn bushes that covered the ancient shrine, he said:

"Our barbaric ancestors built for posterity. Three thousand years have not changed a single stone, and three thousand years hence this shrine will be much the same, the same as it is to-day."

"A shrine outlasts its creed," he added, rising to his feet; and while feasting his eyes on the beautiful green country dozing under the sunny sky, he asked himself how it was that he had lived so long out of Ireland unstirred by a single longing for things of long ago.

"In America we think it is better to be than to have been. But what is to be?" he said; and unable to find an answer to this question, he decided that the readers of his paper would require something more actual than his dreams of the distant peoples that had come to New Grange to worship, when the country was all morass and hazel scrub. "Some human passion and desire," he reflected, "must be gotten into this landscape almost empty of humankind." And thinking how this might be done, he wandered on interested in Ireland's slattern life, touched by the kindness and simplicity of the people. "Poor people," he said, "how touching it is to find them trying to learn their own language, as foreign to them as Latin or Greek.

"The revival of the language will make an article," he said; and he was soon considering how he might convey his first impressions of his native land in a series

of articles—his innate sympathy for Ireland and his long estrangement from her. And conscious of the difficulty of his task, he stopped at every gate to talk with herdsmen, thinking every moment that he would learn the secrets of their lives from them, or at least their opinions regarding the main features of their lives, what they meant when they spoke of striking a blow for Ireland, and their devotion to their Holy Mother the Church. But after every talk he strolled on, saying to himself, "They are without the secret of utterance, they feel as keenly as we do, but they cannot explain themselves," and bidding them good-bye he went on a little farther and buttonholed a policeman. But the policeman, like the herdsmen, could only repeat empty formulas. "The art of revelation has been denied to these people," he muttered; and weary of ideas he stopped one evening to admire an old iron gate that had swung on its hinges for at least a century; and he started musing on the history of the house itself, pleasantly situated in the Dublin mountains, a farmhouse or stead built out of rough stones, only a little hacked with the stonemason's chisel. "Only one degree removed from a Norman keep," he said; and feeling sure he could presume on the owner's goodwill, he peeped into the deep areas also built of great stones and wilding bushes. He had been a rover all his life. Perhaps this was why he liked houses that looked as though they had been built to last for ever. He had acquired no habits, but he liked habits. "For habits," he said, as he leaned over the gate, "tell us whence we have come and what we are. Now the men and women of this house have lain down in their beds and risen from their beds at the same hours generation after generation, and sat down to dinner at the same long oaken table. How very wonderful!" In such a house he, too, might acquire habits. And it seemed to him that he could foresee the parlour with its little horsehair

sofa and faded pictures—probably dogs going after birds. He'd like to live here if the delightful people of the stead would accept him as a lodger? If they would, what luck, for he could learn Ireland's story here better than in any other house he had seen.

The stead had its faults, it was too near Dublin; Dublin was only ten miles away. But it stood in the midst of a mountain region amongst primitive people, to whom it would be delightful to listen in the evening; and in the morning he would find shepherds among the hills who would instruct him in their folk-lore, under the shade of some scarp. It would be useless to hope for a little Irish; the old language was dead in this part of the county, which was a pity, else he might have been tempted to study it. But it was quite possible that turf was burnt still in large eighteenth-century grates.

"You wouldn't like me to go back to America and I never having thrown a sod of turf on the fire?" he pleaded. "And I born and bred in the county itself," he added, "and my father before me?"

He was such a nice young man that Mrs. Grattan felt she could refuse him nothing; she would send to Dublin for a creel. He would have preferred the creel of turf to have come from the bog, but there did not seem to be any bogs in this part of the country; and, feeling he must not be too exacting, he listened with excessive politeness to Mrs. Grattan, who was telling him of the advantages of the country, adorning her description with the names of those who required shooting on the mountains and fishing in the rivers.

"There are some nice fish in the Liffey, sir, and salmon come up the Liffey."

"I am sorry I neither shoot nor fish," he answered. "I am a writer, or to speak more exactly, perhaps, I should say a journalist."

A cloud came into Mrs. Grattan's face at the word

" journalist," and he wondered at this cloud and he asked himself if she disliked journalists because she feared to find herself and her house in the newspapers, or had she had a journalist for a lodger who had left without paying his bill?

But his talk was so pleasant that the cloud died out of her face, and she listened forgetful that time was passing, and was glad that he liked the vale of the Liffey more than Meath.

" No landscape," he said, " is really sympathetic to me that hasn't a river in it."

But she did not understand the subsequent remark that whereas County Meath was all meat County Dublin was all milk, nor his reluctance to go to Dublin to fetch his trunk, for he had taken his rooms for the summer.

" Mrs. Grattan, I should like to pay you a month in advance."

" Oh, sir! "

The proposal—an unwise one—rose out of his fear that she might tell him she had let her rooms when he returned from Dublin. But he could not ask her to go to Dublin to fetch his trunk for him.

" The walk is a long one," he said, looking at her inquiringly.

" You'll be getting a car at Terenure, sir." He left her thinking he had discovered a real Irish house, dreaming always of the past, of the legends, of the heroes, yet preferring an archbishop to any hero. " And always paying the priest," he said to himself a few days afterwards. " The title of my book shall be *A Western Thibet,* and it will be finished in three or four months if nothing comes between me and it. I am beginning to understand them—milk in one county, meat in another, cheese nowhere; the Irish have not yet arrived at the cheese stage."

" Do you eat cheese, Mrs. Grattan? " he asked her when she brought in his mutton chop.

"Well, not very often, sir. We're not great cheese-eaters in Ireland."

"Not of late years, but in the old stories cheese is often mentioned. You are the herdsmen of modern times. Your fairs——"

"If you are writing about the country, sir, you should go to see one of our fairs. The fair at Corrie is one of the biggest about here."

"When is it?"

"Next week, sir."

And at six o'clock next Monday morning he was on his way to Corrie, convinced that the Irish were herdsmen to-day in the same instinctive sense as they were when King Cormac and Finn McColl drank the drugged wine at Tara.

"We Americans are so superficial! We'd set up industries in this beautiful pastoral country which is so pretty in its neglect. We'd tidy up everything. But we'd do well to leave them herdsmen, for their scissors and knives would be the very worst. They would hate smelting, whereas——"

He stopped to admire, for though he was still some miles from the village, the fair had already begun, buyers having advanced far out into the country so as to anticipate rivals.

"The finest herdsmen and the finest horsemen," he muttered to himself, when a gate was held across the road and a boy rode a horse barebacked over it with a rope in its jaws for bridle. "What they like is a horse," Ned remarked to himself, "and a bad rider is as rare in Ireland as a bad cook is in France——" A great deal of buying and selling was in progress, and at every bid hands were grasped. But the great clapping of hands ceased suddenly and every head was uncovered.

"The Angelus, sir," a peasant said in answer to his question; and as soon as the prayer was over everybody

bought a pipe from an old woman sitting behind a cockle store, evidently for luck.

"They can't all have forgotten their pipes, or maybe it is the custom of the country to buy from her."

The fair was now in full clamour in the main street. Another street joins the main street, and up and down this Y-shaped village herdsmen were shouting, and whacking their beasts, forcing them backwards until their tails hung over the half-doors of the houses, or forcing them forwards until their noses pressed against the windows; and not knowing whither to go, bullock strove against bullock, getting up on each other's backs. To avoid the passing hooves, dogs and cats had been gathered into the houses, but a Buff Orpington, and a very nice chicken too, not happening to escape in time, was trodden on, and thinking no one was watching him, a man picked up the bird and hid it within the lining of his coat. He started shouting immediately afterwards, and up went his stick, and down it came on a white steer.

"One gets a chicken and the other a blow," Ned said, "such is the way of the world." "But who are they?" he asked.

Three boon companions evidently they were—three well-known characters he judged them to be; and applying to a passer-by for information, he learned that the giant was Michael Moran. And his eyes followed a great bulk twenty stone weight and six feet six for certain, accoutred in tarpaulins—for though the sun shone frequently, the showers were heavy. Ned reckoned the giant's boots to be several pounds in weight; the tarpaulin hat was like a small haycock; and he liked the great round funny face under it, the mouth in it turned up like a new moon. As if aware of the admiration he excited, Michael Moran walked talking and laughing between his admiring disciples, the biggest stick in the fair

in the hand of little Patsy Flynn, a face as curious as a ferret's with bunches of red whiskers.

"And for sartin, the best joke in Connaught at the end of his tongue at this moment!"

"And who did you say the third man was?"

"Is it Jimmy Welsh you are asking—the podgeen at the other side of Michael?"

"I didn't see him rightly," Ned answered. "But who is Michael?"

"So you never heard of Michael?"

"I'm a stranger in these parts—home from America on a holiday."

"Well, then, when you go back you will be able to be telling them of Michael, the biggest pig-jobber in Connaught, he that buys pigs on one side of the county and sells on the other, making a fine profit! Now as they'll be wanting to hear of Patsy Flynn and Jimmy Welsh, I'll tell you a story——"

At that moment Ned's attention was drawn to a woman, tall and strong as a man, dressed in thick skirts and wearing great boots like a drover. She went about brandishing a stick, cursing all those who laughed at her cow, a poor skeleton beast which she had been driving unmercifully up and down the fair since eight in the morning. The tired beast hardly responded to her stick, and everybody was laughing. The cattle-dealers and the herdsmen gathered round, teasing her with threepenny bits. "The value of the hide," they said; and the success of the fair was when a man asked the poor woman if she would share a bet with him. He would bet any gentleman present half-a-crown that he could read a newspaper through the cow. Would any gentleman present oblige him with the loan of a newspaper? A friend pulled one from his pocket, and the woman struck at her tormentors and chased them round her cow, and

her invective was so vehement and so picturesque that Ned could not help wondering.

"As well as the gift of herding, they possess the gift of blasphemy," he said. And he began to wonder at the patience with which the sellers waited for the buyers, keeping their animals back with raised sticks and shouts when they showed any tendency to stray. But it did not seem to him that much business was being done; he caught sight of the same animals in the same places as he passed up and down, and it was a relief to see a herd of bullocks driven under an archway. "These have undoubtedly changed hands," he said; and he admired the obstinacy of a red steer that would not enter the yard. "The animal possibly suspects that he is required for beefsteaks." He came upon a dozen fat sheep; and two men, butchers no doubt, were feeling for their ribs through their fleece. "But the sheep are less suspicious," he said, and wandered on in search of new material for an article, coming at the end of the town upon two men in carts under a tarpaulin vaunting the merits of old clothes.

"Down with the landlords!" cried one, catching sight of Ned, who, feeling he could give back an answer as well as another man, said:

"Now, where would you be buying your old clothes if there were no landlords? Many's the fine jacket you've got from them—maybe you'd like to have a look into my wardrobe."

The men looked at him for a moment.

"I guess you've left most of it over yonder," said one, for Ned's accent had betrayed him. "We don't deal in American cloth!"

A shout of laughter went up, and, feeling he had been outmatched, Ned did not stop again till he came upon some pig-jobbers, dexterous in lifting the pigs into the

creels by their hind-legs and their tails, and so quickly that they hadn't time to squeal.

"He do be wanting a sup of water, but I can't leave the sheep," said a herdsman, speaking of his dog.

"Then I'll be going and getting him one."

The jobber looked at Ned in surprise.

"You'll be wanting a drink yourself." It was then that Ned awoke to the fact that his tongue was like a lump of dried sponge.

"A drink!" he cried; "anything! Lemon squash, ginger beer, lemonade!"

"We have no call for them drinks."

"Then porter, and quickly! Or spirit—John Jameson—seven year old."

"We have none."

"Porter."

"Will you have it here or shall I bring it into the tap-room?"

A seat in a cool tap-room appealed to him; he had been on his legs since early morning, but such a reek met him on the threshold that he was overcome for a moment.

"A fine warm smell, sir," was the remark of a drover in Ned's ear. "I can't stand it," Ned said, and went out, his eye alighting on some forty or fifty calves penned in a corner, a small patch of hair clipped from the left shoulder of every one of them.

"The mark of the butchers that have bought them, a couple of Frenchmen who have gone back to Dublin to get their notes changed. It's for them that the fellows in the tap-room do be waiting, drinking the money they have had in advance for the calves, and it's them that can afford to get drunk this morning should they feel disposed, considering the price they got for their bastes, three pounds ten up to four pounds apiece. A few gallons of porter divided up between them won't be felt."

"Not until the morning," Ned interjected.

"Them fellows have heads on them as hard as the rocks on the hill, and a fine price them French butchers will make on the calves—for finer I've never laid eyes on—if they follows my advice, which is not to wather the bastes; even if they do be losing four or five, they'll be gainers in the end."

"So while the calves are dying of thirst, them that reared them will be drinking!"

"Or retching! For as many as fifteen gallons they've drunk between them, and I doubt if there will be one sober enough among them to count the Frenchmen's money."

"Do you know who that man is—the one that's just gone by—he that's wearing the straw hat—you don't?"

"Well that's Mr. Cronin, one of the biggest dairymen in the county of Dublin, milking more than sixty cows, and with the benefit of spring water at his very door to help him through the winter. You can't but know his house if you come from Tallagh, about a mile down the road, straight as you can go from Mrs. Grattan's. And you've heard tell of his daughter Ellen, the prettiest girl in these parts, if you have no aversion to red hair."

"So that's Cronin," Ned said to himself, and bidding the drover Godspeed, he started for home, thinking that a girl who is like her father is never quite so interesting as a girl that reminds you of no one you've ever seen before.

It was about a mile up the road that he heard the sound of wheels.

"If you'd like a lift, it is no trouble at all, for don't I be passing Mrs. Grattan's gate?"

"Well, thank you," he answered, and settled himself by the side of Mr. Cronin, a plump, elderly man with a long white nose and a small insignificant chin. As soon as Cronin shifted his hat Ned saw that he was bald, and

he began to wonder if the fringe of white hair had ever been red hair. "Children generally inherit their parent's complexion," he said to himself; and he plied Cronin with questions, hoping he would turn his head, for a profile presents a very incomplete likeness. But Cronin's head remained fixed, and Ned began to hope that Ellen did not inherit Cronin's gift of silence.

Long, level silences, gapped here and there with a remark, represent the conversation meted out to him during the ten miles' drive. Yet he had left no subject untouched; the cattle were good; the pigs were better in America—the American pig he thought fattened quicker than the Irish. Even that pregnant remark did not succeed in drawing many words from Cronin, and he began to wonder why Cronin had pulled the horse up beside him. It was not for the pleasure of his conversation for certain, but there must be a reason.

"Your daughter sometimes goes to Mrs. Grattan's to tea, I am told."

"Yes, and hearing that you played the fiddle she asked about you."

So that was why he had pulled up the horse. He expected the conversation to drop at this point, but to his surprise Cronin added: "And as my daughter takes a great interest in music and books, she told me if I was to meet you at the fair, not to pass you on the road without offering you a lift."

"It was very kind of her; what kind of music does your daughter like?"

"She plays the piano." Half an hour later Cronin said: "We're about half-way now," and the gig rolled on, Ned wondering what sort of a daughter this silent man could have begotten.

As he was about to pull up his horse in front of Mrs. Grattan's gate, Mr. Cronin said: "There she is—up the road in front of us."

It seemed to Ned that it was no more than the merest politeness to ask Mr. Cronin to introduce him to his daughter, but Cronin made no reply; and while Ned was wondering if he should repeat his request, thinking perhaps that Cronin had not heard him, the gig rolled past Mrs. Grattan's door, and he said to himself, "He is going to introduce me after all. But what a queer man!" And he would have bent his mind still more closely to the study of Cronin if Ellen's back had not engaged his attention at the moment. "A little woman," he said to himself; and when the gig stopped, before the first words were spoken, he was deep in admiration of the slight, shapely figure with a pointed face, and the head crowned with rich red hair gathered up in combs behind the pretty ears. But it was her eyes that fascinated Ned at the time and ever afterwards; long after he had bidden her good-bye for ever he saw her turquoise eyes looking at him through a blue veil.

"So you did what I told you, father. That was good of you." Then turning to Ned she said, "I was afraid father would forget. Mrs. Grattan told me you were going to the fair, and I knew that coming back you would find the way long. . . . Father," she said, "you can go on. Mr. Carmady will walk a little way with me."

Ned had already begun to think of her as a delightful little person, and the wheels of the gig had not gone round many times when she burst into talk like a bird into song.

"I heard from Mrs. Grattan that you are an American, and that you have come here to write about Ireland; and that was why I wished to make your acquaintance. It seemed to me a pity that you should put anything into your book that would prejudice the people in America against the people at home."

"But I don't intend to write anything that isn't true—a book of impressions and memories, that——"

"But, Mr. Carmady, from lack of knowledge you may write things that you would regret afterwards."

Ned admitted that this was a danger, and they talked of the new forces, Ellen explaining hurriedly, as if anxious to say everything before she reached her gate, that the new Ireland was entirely a Gaelic Ireland, an Ireland that for centuries had sought refuge underground like a river, but was coming up again.

"We believe," she said, "that we are sufficient in ourselves, and need no ideas from strangers. Our mistake was that we did not cultivate what was in us."

According to Ellen, Ireland contained everything the race could want for many hundreds of years, not only food and wood and stone, but ideas. All the people had to do was to go back to the Gaelic sources, and there they would find an art and literature of their own. Ned listened, amused at her fiery faith. "One of the ancient Druidesses," he said, "born out of due time;" and to draw her on still further he ventured to remind her of the disunion that had always existed.

"A quarter is in Rome, a quarter in England, a quarter in America; and it is out of the remnant of the people at home that you would build a nation, is it?"

Ellen again turned her turquoise eyes on Ned's.

"You have a great deal to learn," she said. And they lingered by the gate, talking of the revival of the language, and how the people would find new inspiration in it, Ellen maintaining that if Ireland had not yet achieved any great literary work, it was not because the race was not literary, but because it had unfortunately been looking for a long while towards an alien literature.

He accompanied her to her gate, and just as she was about to bid him good-bye she begged him to come to supper next Sunday, and he returned home thinking of

her eyes, her hair and all her person, which, so far as he could judge it under her dress, seemed excellently well shapen.

CHAP. III.

IT was nearly midnight, and he lingered in the avenue listening to a corncrake in the meadows—a doleful bird it seemed to him in the dusky night, with a round moon hanging above a line of distant trees. A dog barked in the village, and Ned remembered that Mrs. Grattan had told him that Lizzie—Mrs. Cronin's parlour-maid—looked upon it as a great treat to be allowed to sleep at home. He had learnt from her that eight or nine lived in the cabin, two or three sleeping in each bed, and they were all sleeping now, huddled together. He suspected that it was the mystery of the silent night that had caused his thoughts to stray to these lowly lives huddled in sleep yonder at the turn of the road. He could just distinguish up in the sky the sluggish roll of the mountains, dim and grey; and he asked himself if he would like to live in this queer, empty country, accepting its destiny as part of his destiny, the last remnant of barbarous Europe petering out notwithstanding all Ellen might say to the contrary. She was a pretty girl and an interesting girl, and he had not discovered a single insincerity in her, except perhaps her love of music, for she didn't like music; she only said she did, to please him. Her attempt to accompany him was most unfortunate; he hadn't been able to go on playing; and the big girl who had taken Ellen's place at the piano hadn't succeeded much better. Ellen had no doubt been at great pains to learn a little music, but one cannot learn music; and to rid himself of the memory of his accompanist he felt he would like to play something in this avenue under the elm-trees—something of Schubert's; it seemed to him

that he had never played so well, and on turning his head he saw what he had never seen before—a lunar rainbow.

"I like playing to the moon; a much better audience than yonder.

"Even the silence seems grey," he added. "Everything is hushed, mountains and meadows, everything except that noisy corncrake." Again he began to think of the lowly lives huddled in sleep in the village, and the glimmering panes in the square house under the mountains reminded him that behind one of those windows Ellen was probably letting down her red tresses. He wished he were with her, in a way, and began to wonder if he were moving towards some destiny, for if he were not, why had he come into this queer country among these queer people? Was it chance that had brought him here, or was it that he was going to marry this pretty girl? It takes two to make a marriage; but Ned did not doubt that he would be able to marry Ellen if he were so minded, and fell to thinking what kind of a wife she would make, and if he could love a woman who didn't care for music. "But it may have been because I was by her. She was nervous; on another occasion she may play better; or is it that she has never lived with musical people?"

A few weeks later he was glad to escape from her music and walk with her under the trees that grew about the house. The rambling airs bore a delicious sweetness, and while listening to Ellen who was talking about her life in the lonely farmhouse, he wondered whence the sweetness came, but did not dare to interrupt her, and they passed out of the wood towards the garden, the sweetness becoming more intense every minute. At last he saw it—a great syringa, large as a house, covered with white blossoms.

"Ah, the syringa . . . is it you or the syringa that fills the night with fragrance?"

She raised her eyes in gratitude, and the scent became so overpowering that they walked into the wood again; a seat appeared under a beech-tree and side by side they sat looking at the markings on the moon.

The moonlight had taken the blue out of Ellen's eyes and a great deal of the red out of her hair, but her hands drooped prettily as they moved along her fan, and her face was pointed and pretty, and her voice musical; and her intense faith in Ireland's destiny seemed to have awakened a response in him; he believed while he was with her that perhaps the twentieth century would reveal to the world Ireland's personality, and that the race would pass out of a pastoral into an artistic period, and perhaps find a great literary period too, now that Ireland had returned to her own language.

"Perhaps all she says is true about Ireland," Ned muttered to himself as he pursued his way down the long avenue. And he began to wonder if he could do as these people do—think of Ireland as if she had an independent existence apart from the people in it. That was criticism, and he would try to put criticism behind him and yield himself to Ireland and her language, which he had promised Ellen to learn—a promise given after seeing Ellen for the third time! She had, however, promised to teach him, and on the morrow he was to join a class of which she was the teacher. As soon as the class was over, she would doubtless allow him to accompany her to her gate, and though he might never marry her, though he might never even kiss her, this one thing was sure—that he would acquire a knowledge of Ireland's history and her present condition from her; and with that knowledge he would be able to write a better book, a deeper book than the one he had intended to write originally. The acquisition of the Irish language would give him a new point of view. But would he persevere and ever learn more than a few words—enough to satisfy this red-

headed girl? His love-making, if he were ever to make love to her, would have to be done in English; of that he felt sure. And he asked himself what would old Cronin say to this learning of Irish, to these evening walks, and the lessons in the afternoon; for Ellen had said he must do some work out of class-time.

Mrs. Cronin had been dead many years, and the portrait that hung in the parlour had told Ned that his surmise was right regarding Ellen, whom he had supposed from the first time he laid eyes upon her to be the replica of her mother, so unlike was she to her father. Her unlikeness to her father was as marked in her mind as in her body; Ned had not been to Brookfield many times before he began to suspect that Mr. Cronin entertained no deep belief that any heroic destiny awaited Ireland. His ideas about Ireland were that hers was a homely destiny, beef and mutton and pigs and perhaps butter for England. Ellen left the room indignant, and Ned tried to get Cronin to confide his opinions, but opinions were not characteristic of Cronin: he seemed to have avoided forming any. Ned remarked this, and admired the old man's fortitude, for he was able to live without complaining, almost without thinking, in the habit of the last fifty years; interested only in his farms and in the price of cattle, now and again giving way to a faint disquietude when he read in the papers some news to the effect that the importation of cattle might lead to a decline in the price of meat. He sometimes indulged in a grumble about his daughter's housekeeping, attributing the badness of the dinner to the Irish language; all her time was spent upon it; he did not seem to catch sight of the cloud on his daughter's face; for he had just cut himself a large piece of cake, and his eyes seemed to say, "I'll have another piece presently."

After dinner they went into the billiard-room, and he noticed there was one thing Ellen did not care to do—

did not dare to do, and that was to draw Ned from the billiard-table or to take him from the billiard-room when they had ceased playing; and he guessed the reason—his talk amused Cronin, who would have been angry with his daughter if she had suggested that Ned should follow her to the drawing-room. He liked to sit, smoking his pipe, listening to Ned talking and telling of his adventures; how his parents had emigrated to Manchester when he was nine, and how he had felt when he was sixteen that he must escape from the dreariness of brick chimneys and their smoke-cloud. Ned talked with just such gaiety as appealed to this grey, silent man, telling how he had joined a travelling circus on its way to the Continent. Cronin would allude to the story evening after evening, and Ned added to the story from time to time. Sometimes things long forgotten would come into his mind, and he would develop some faint fact into a new story; but the central fact of the story always remained the same, and it was that that had interested Cronin from the first—how Ned had been charged to look after the lions, and to be sure to keep the ventilating-slides open.

"There was no use pleading I was ill."

"And after that what did you do?" Ellen asked, for she too was interested in the story the first time she heard it, though afterwards her father's mention of it annoyed her. Cronin would sometimes tell the story himself of how Ned had played the fiddle all the way across the Atlantic, and how delighted everybody had been with his playing, somebody saying that he ought to be engaged at an opera house. Ned's account of how he went to the conductor and played for him was always a great success; and this story was followed by other stories, some humorous, some pathetic. Ned did not fail to retail any stories he had heard in America, and he had heard thousands; and then, finding that he had no success unless he attributed them to himself, he did so.

"And what will you be doing now?" Cronin said. "I'm afraid you're a rolling stone. You'll never stop here."

"But, father, he is going to stay in Ireland. Ireland wants a new leader, and the leader must come from the outside."

Cronin never answered his daughter. He just continued smoking, and later on tried to draw Ned into another story, a favourite one—Ned's experiences in Cuba: how one night they had crossed a mountain by a bridle-path. At the top of the mountain they had come to a ledge of rock three feet high, and had to leap their horses one by one, and the enemy might have attacked them any moment.

Ellen did not begrudge her father his billiards, but after one or two or three games she would have liked him to go to bed and leave Ned free to walk out with her to the end of the avenue: it was only then that she could talk with him alone. But every night her father seemed to stay up later, smoking his pipe in his armchair and shaking his foot, a slightly hysterical movement that she had noticed all her life. One night she asked Ned if he had noticed how her father shook his foot; the question seemed to advance them in their intimacy, and they laughed heartily over the grey woollen sock. By this time Ned had become part of the household; the old fellow wanted somebody to come and play billiards with him in the evening, and Ned knew that Cronin would never trouble to ask him what his intentions were regarding Ellen. But he was asking himself this question, for it had become quite clear to him that he would have to do something; either he would have to ask Ellen to marry him, or he would have to bend over and kiss her on the neck without saying anything, and if she accepted his kisses it would be with a view to matrimony, no doubt. He imagined himself kissing her, and when she turned

astonished, his face would remain grave—grave and hierarchic, as the priest's after he kisses the altar and turns to the congregation.

He smiled at his own absurdity, but his smile died away quickly; for in his sudden inspiration he had discovered himself to be without enough will to run away from Ellen's red hair and her turquoise eyes. And that being so, he concluded that it would be well to go down to Brookfield and make an end of it. Just half a dozen words. He wasn't certain that he could love the same woman always: Ellen was one of those who, once she had fixed her heart upon a man, would not find it easy to console herself with another; of that he was sure: and he stood a long time asking himself questions to which his heart gave back no single answer.

His only certainty was that his life had fallen into a great torment. She had written him a letter that morning, and it would have to be answered. But he could not compose one, and it seemed to him that it was easier to go down to Brookfield and tell her why he had not been to see her for some time. His book was always an excuse. But if he went to Brookfield he knew that he would ask her to marry him, and he was not sure he wanted to marry her. His mood veered like a gale all the afternoon, and when the clock struck four he put on his hat and walked down the road and stopped, surprised, finding himself at her door.

CHAP. IV.

"MISS ELLEN isn't in the house, sir. You'll find her in the garden."

It was more agreeable to Ned to find her in the garden than in the drawing-room. The garden at Brookfield had always interested him, for he had never seen so large a

garden or such high walls—old red-brick walls, and a view of the Dublin mountains, whose purple wastes contrasted with Ellen's rosery and carnations just coming into bloom. He had found her so often in her garden that he had come to associate her with it; and he liked to remember that five years ago it was a turnip-field which her father had yielded to her. Her garden was entirely of her own making, the walls excepted. The fruit-trees had been planted by her, and she had designed the walks that followed the walls, and the walk down the middle leading to the mound where the walks branched to the right and left. Green painted posts had been set in a circle, and she had trailed roses from one to the other. Lying farther back came a large plot of grass on which they sometimes had tennis. The romance of the garden was, however, its stream which entered the garden at the right-hand corner and followed the wall, flowing away at the opposite corner, but a tributary turned at right angles and flowed half-way down the garden, disappearing mysteriously underground somewhere about the middle of the garden. The banks of this stream were overgrown with many kinds of shrubs, wild thorn, ash saplings, willow weed and meadow sweet; and every kind of briar grew there in profusion; and when some five feet of mud were taken out trout thrived in the ancient piscine, for Brookfield had once been a monastery. And Ned often found Ellen fishing in her garden.

The day he went to meet her determined to kiss her if the opportunity occurred, she was dressed in a striped muslin variegated with pink flowers; there were black bows in her hat and black ribbon was round the bottom of her dress.

"How pretty she looks against the old wall touched here and there with ivy," he said; and when she leaned forward pursuing a trout against the bank with her fishing-net, the grace of the movement enchanted him.

"There's a great big trout," she said, "but he is very cunning. He dives and gets under the net. Come and help me to catch him."

"But how am I to help you to catch him?"

"By going to the gardener and asking him to give you a net."

"How stupid of me not to have thought of it!" And Ned ran away to the gardener and came back with a net, thinking that the presence of the gardener was extremely unfortunate, since he had made up his mind to kiss Ellen if the opportunity occurred, and though the garden was large it would be unwise to kiss her unless he were certain that there was nobody about.

"Now which side of the stream will you take?" Ellen said. "I'll take the side next the wall."

There was a path there nearly free from briars, and she held her light summer dress so tightly round her that Ned had an opportunity of admiring her figure; but he was busy trying to save himself from falling into the water, for on his side the stream was overgrown not only with briars, but at every moment there were roots of trees protruding from the bank, and it was difficult to make his way through them. Once he very nearly slipped, only saving himself at the last moment; if he had fallen into the stream his plight would have been ridiculous, and there would be no chance of kissing Ellen. Nor would there be any chance until the trout was caught. So he plied himself to the task, hunting the fish up and down the stream; but the fish knew how to escape the nets and dived at the right moment. It seemed impossible to tire him out, so many were the hiding-places in which he could rest.

"I don't think we shall ever get him," Ned said. But Ellen was more persevering.

"Let us try once more."

"Well, once more." And they drove slowly up against

the bank, Ellen fearing every moment he would jump the net.

"Well, we've got him at last," Ned said, and somewhat proud of having caught him they sat down with three fish beside them, panting and gasping, their speckled bellies drying in the sun. Ellen touched the big trout with her parasol.

"Would he live if we were to put him back again?"

"Put him back after all the trouble we have had to get him out!" And they tried to discuss how he would eat.

"But Ned, you mustn't put your hand upon my knee."

"Mustn't I, dear? But you will let me kiss you."

"Are you a Catholic?" she said, as she turned her face from his.

"But what has that got to do with it?"

"If we were married it would be different."

"But what has marriage got to do with my love of you?"

"You see, Ned, I am a Catholic; if I weren't I'm afraid I'd be very wicked."

"Very wicked, Ellen? You very wicked! And what would you do if you weren't a Catholic? pick pockets?"

"No, I didn't mean that." And then Ned told her of her sensuousness and how he had observed it in her eyes, in her manner of approaching him. But she denied the truth of this description of herself.

"As if you were ashamed of an impulse! Why, there is nothing so delightful in a woman or in a man!"

"Oh, Ned! Don't talk like that. I don't like to hear you say these things. No one has ever kissed me and I am glad of it."

"How is that—why are you glad? Were you never tempted?"

"Aren't you glad, Ned, that I have never kissed any-

body else? But you have kissed many women, I suppose?"

"A few. But I never wished to kiss anybody as much as I wish to kiss you."

"We have only known each other a month, but I think there was a shadow of you in my thoughts always. Perhaps you think me very foolish."

"Foolish, Ellen! How could I think you foolish for thinking of me? I am thinking of my great good fortune that brought me to Ireland. I left Ireland when I was nine, and ever since this green country and you have been floating in my mind."

"I don't think I should have cared for you, Ned, if you hadn't loved Ireland."

"It was our love of Ireland that brought us together—interested us in each other, and I have learned to love you much better than I did—though I loved you the first time I saw you—since I began to learn Irish . . . with you."

"But Ned, you have made very little progress."

"Now that I know you like me I'll make more."

"You promise me? . . . But you mustn't put your hand upon my knee."

"But the temptation——"

"Well, then, let us get up."

"No. Let us remain. Why should we get up? It's so pleasant here on this green bank," and he pressed her back and drew her towards him. "And it's so pleasant to be sitting near you in this sweet garden."

"Yes, Ned, it would be pleasant to sit here with you if you didn't make love to me—I don't like it."

The garden seemed very large, a great square of earth under a grey lustreless sky hanging above the walls, apparently not more than a few feet, and out of this greyness a soft diffused light fell. There was something threatening in the silence, and the heat of the day was

like that of a greenhouse. The gardener was too far away for them to hear his spade, but when they listened intently they could hear the gurgle of the stream, and now and then a swallow shrieked as it flew past.

"Do you know, Ellen, I shall always remember you by your eyes? They seem to me like turquoises; you wore a blue veil the day your father brought me home from the fair."

She remembered that she had hesitated between a blue and a brown. What had decided her in favour of the blue?

In these moments of summer meditation she became to Ned more like a wife than a mistress. As a mistress, this love affair would end in unhappiness. Every woman has her own style, he reflected. Ellen would make an excellent wife, and he would be infinitely happy with her living in this country, learning the Irish language, and becoming a leader of the Irish people. That was her ambition for him. She had said that the people wanted a new leader, and when she said that she was thinking of him, and now he was thinking of himself. Perhaps he was the man that Ireland wanted, and he seemed to love Ellen well enough to marry her. Her Catholicism faded out of his mind; it was the woman he loved; it was Ellen's eyes that captured his senses; he must kiss those eyes; he was sure of that, if of nothing else.

"Ellen, if we are to be married I may kiss you. But I cannot kiss you here, the gardener is moving about those Jerusalem artichokes. Let us go into the arbour."

Ellen did not answer, and all the way down the path Ned wondered if she would follow him into the arbour or refuse to do so at the last moment.

"Ned, are you sure that you love me?" she said, stopping at the entrance of the arbour, overcome by a sense of sudden delight.

"Yes, I am quite sure."

"Then I'll let you kiss me."

And the moment he put his arm about her waist she fell back upon his shoulder, and when their lips met she closed her eyes.

"Ned, you mustn't kiss me like that," she cried, struggling from him. "Let me go!" And then, catching sight of Ned's disappointed face, she added: "It will be very different when we are married, dear."

"It's so pleasant in this arbour," he began, and then he felt if he were going to marry Ellen he would gain more by obedience to her wishes than he would by contravening them. She was of the wifely type.

"You don't answer me. You love me well enough to marry me, don't you?"

"Should I want to kiss you, Ellen, if I didn't?"

"Ned, I am not a fool, but I love you, and very dearly, and you will not deceive me? You will not make me regret? You will not treat me badly in any way, though you are not a Catholic, and I'm afraid, Ned, you never will be?"

"But you do me great injustice. Never have I done any harm to anybody in my life—and never shall."

"Not willingly, Ned. No—not willingly, but we are so different, and a month ago we didn't know each other, and now you mean so much to me. Isn't it strange?"

"But what will your father say?"

"Father will say nothing—you know he won't, Ned. He likes you as much as I do."

"And he likes trout for his supper, too. We have forgotten the fish, Ellen. I'll run back for them."

CHAP. V.

"MRS. GRATTAN, I have gotten some news which I think will surprise you. I think I am going to marry Miss Cronin. . . . But you don't look surprised."

"Well, no, sir; you see you and she have been a great deal about together, and there was no reason—only there'll be many a sore heart in the country for many a day, for there wasn't a young man who wasn't looking after Miss Ellen, her fine fortune, and her pretty red hair. . . ."

"Yes, it's of her red hair I am thinking."

And then they talked of Mr. Cronin, who would not withhold his consent, but would give Ellen as many thousand pounds as she asked him, for she had always led him by the nose.

"But, Mrs. Grattan, do you think she will lead me by the nose?"

"Well, I wouldn't be saying that, sir—but there is no knowing. She has always had her way with everybody she met. But you'll be wanting your tea."

It is very exciting to think that one's life has been decided, for marriage is a great decision, and Ned could neither read nor write, and, feeling he must talk to somebody, he went into Mrs. Grattan's kitchen and questioned her about Ellen; and he learnt that before she had taken up with politics she had been a great scholar, and sitting on the kitchen table he swung his legs, wondering how it was that Ellen had never told him she knew Latin.

"There's somebody at the door. You'll excuse me, I must go to it," and she came back saying it was Miss Ellen, and for friendliness they all had tea in the kitchen.

"So you heard the news, Mrs. Grattan? Ned had told you—and aren't you surprised?"

"Well, no then, I'm not. It always seemed to me from the very first that you two were suited to each other."

"You'll never tell me any more that we're not suited, will you?" Ned interrupted.

"No, not if we have Mrs. Grattan's approval. She knew me when I was a little girl." And Ellen spoke about James, Mrs. Grattan's second son, whose health did not allow him to live in Ireland, but who was doing well at the Cape, and of many other family matters which Ned knew nothing about, until he began to feel bored and went to the window.

"Father says you are to come back to supper, Ned. You must come back, for we shall have one of the trout."

"And it would be unlucky if I didn't share it with you."

As they walked down the road, Ellen said: "As our love began in Ireland, we might go for a tour round Ireland when we're married, and see the places that Ireland loves best."

He had seen Tara, but there was no reason why he shouldn't see it again; and he would like to see it in company with Ellen, and point out to her the Rath of the Hostages and the Rath of Grania, and from Tara they would go to the Druid altars.

"And we'll creep into them together through the Druid stones."

The abbey of Clonmacnoise was not very far away, and from Clonmacnoise they would go to Cashel to see Cormac's chapel. There was St. Kevin's bed at Glendalough to be seen, but Killarney they would avoid. The Aran islands tempted them more, for that was Gaelic Ireland, and all along the shores of the Irish lakes there were ruins of chieftain castles and of monasteries, and on the lake islands ruins of hermits' cells and beehive huts to be seen somewhere, and many books to be read.

And glutted with literature they went forth after their

marriage, and all the autumn was spent dreaming amid crumbling stones of a past that shall never be again, nor anything like it, unless, as Ellen said, the ancient language of the Gael should be revived and bring back to Ireland other tales of heroism and chivalry. It was all vision and dream, but none the worse for that. The world has a course to pursue, and it follows it irrespective of our desire. And very much interested—at least in the surface of his mind—with Ireland's past, Ned yielded himself entirely to Ellen's enthusiasm, much, he thought, to his father-in-law's dissatisfaction; for he could not help thinking, and it amused him to think, that the old fellow liked him better before he had begun to learn the Irish language, and had joined the new political movement which in Ellen's opinion was going to regenerate Ireland.

"But I remember, father, when you used to sit up till twelve o'clock talking of Parnell."

Cronin growled a little and lay still farther back in his armchair; he crossed his legs and shook his foot from time to time, puffed at his briar-root, and spoke no more till Ellen went up to bed. Then he grew more communicative, venturing to remark that it was difficult to understand what her idea was in wishing to furnish another house on the other side of Dublin when she had this one to live in. Ned was of the same mind as Cronin, and admitted to the old fellow that he would much rather stop at Brookfield than live in a small house on the other side of Dublin.

"Where there won't be a billiard-room."

Ned kept his countenance, though he was tempted to smile, for he knew that Cronin was thinking he would have to fall back upon the parson for his evening billiards, and the parson's playing had never been to his liking; he always moved his ball. As soon as the conversation turned on the new politics, in his brief, silent way Cronin tried to dissuade Ned against them. But

Ned was bitten by the idea of political leadership. The new movement had taken hold of the country, and the country would go with it, so it was said, if a leader were to come forward; and what was wanted was a young man that the people knew nothing about, who would voice the new ideas for them: for the people were weary of the older school of politics, everything would have to be begun afresh. And Ned seemed to himself to be just the man that the new movement required. He wasn't hampered with a past, that was a great point in his favour. He was a good speaker, that was another point in his favour. He was energetic, that was a third point in his favour. He was a man of private means—Ellen could always get what money she liked from her father—that was another point in his favour. And with so many points in one's favour one goes ahead in Irish politics.

"All the same, you'll find she'll be leading you by the nose," the old man muttered at the end of a long silence. "I have invested five thousand pounds in foreign securities in her name, so that you may be free to advocate whatever policy you may judge best for old Ireland, but it will be Ellen—the voice of Jacob, the hand of Esau."

"Do you think she will lead me?" And Ned looked interrogatively across the hearthrug, and admitted he would prefer to live in the old seventeenth-century stead, so much did he like the great walls and the black mahogany sideboard. He hoped to lie with Ellen one night in the four-poster that Cronin had slept in for the last thirty years without ever thinking it a beautiful thing. He indulged his fancy—both of them, of course, would wear nightcaps. She would look very dainty in one of those frilled caps of old time, but he was not certain about his own nightcap, though he had begun to cultivate the appearance that seemed to him in harmony with the stead, instructing his tailor that his trousers were to be

several inches wider in the leg than the present fashion allowed, and drawn in at the ankles.

"Peg-tops?" the tailor had asked, surprised.

"Yes, peg-tops," he had said, "and the coat is to be braided." He ordered a bunch of cravats in the style of the 'sixties. As his moustache was not in keeping with his clothes, he had intended to shave it. But to-day was not the day for shaving, and as Ellen liked the feel of it when she kissed him, he thought it would be a pity if she were not allowed to enjoy it, however reprehensible her taste for it might be. And, whistling an old tune, he pondered his side-whiskers, at present but little bunches; the two gentlemen that hung in varnished maplewood frames in the drawing-room at the Cronins' wore larger bunches. His whiskers would grow like theirs, and he refused to shave them, though there was no longer any hope of persuading her to remain in Tallagh.

Ellen's excuse for leaving Brookfield was that her father's politics were Unionist, and would compromise Ned. He could not see why his father-in-law's sins should be visited on him, but Ellen had her way in the end, as her father had prophesied she would.

"We don't mean to desert you, father."

"But the last train is at ten, so there will be no time for a game of billiards after dinner."

"Father, you are only thinking of your billiards; I am thinking of his political career." And Ned remembered these words some six months later, for as he was hurrying away to catch the train she stopped him at the door.

"But, Ned, you won't say anything against religion —I know you won't; but I beg of you not to say anything against the priests—you promise me?"

"I promise you, Ellen; but Ireland will remain the same old lady she has always been until——"

"Until religion is done away with."

"No, not religion, Ellen, but priests. I can't help laughing when they pass me in the street. Of all the comic inventions, a priest—well, he takes the cake, Ellen!"

"If you knew, Ned, how such remarks distress me, I'm sure you wouldn't make them, for I believe that you love me."

"Of course I love you, Ellen, and shall love you till your hair turns grey."

"Only till then, Ned?"

"Well, we won't discuss that question now, Ellen; for if I don't start at once, I shall miss my train . . . and I shall have to walk quickly."

"But I'm going to the station with you."

"Well, that will be nice. . . . But do you feel well enough for so long a walk?"

The morning seemed to Ned to be one of the most beautiful he had ever known, and he was sure there was not a pleasanter road in all Ireland, so wide, so smooth, and shaded by trees, just the kind of road he liked; and Ellen was the pleasantest of companions, always sympathetic, always grave and slow of speech, for she thought carefully, and she knew Ireland so well that she was often able to call his attention to a point which he might with advantage set forth in the meeting. She was always saying that he exaggerated the value of her suggestions, but Ned did not believe that this was so. The most she would admit was that she was in touch with contemporary politics and contemporary ideas—a pretty fair pilot; and without a pilot he admitted he would have no chance of keeping off the rocks of the treacherous shore of Irish politics.

"No good will come of attacking the priests. And then, dear, think of the grief it would bring to me!" And such a look of distress came into her face that he

determined never to speak of the priests again as magicians—at least, not in her presence.

"Nobody can help having opinions, Ellen; all we can do is to refrain from expressing opinions that give pain to others."

"But I should like you to be yourself, Ned. I hate the thought that you are surrendering any of your opinions for my sake."

"You are worth it. Good-bye, darling."

As he sat watching the landscape regrets fleeted past that both by circumstances and by his promises to Ellen he was prevented from raising the one question in Ireland that seemed to him to be worth raising. But Ellen was worth the sacrifice. And without sacrifice we should not be able to appreciate the divinity of our idol. On his return from the meeting he would find her waiting for him at the station, a smile in her eyes, her parasol aslant, and they would saunter down the fine stretch of road shaded with trees, talking of their mutual life amid calm pasturages decorated with cows lying in golden lights amid the long shadows.

His life had hitherto been but disorder, and he was captivated by the order of his house; his affections had been disordered too—now there was order in them, and it was still quite an adventure for him to walk into the dining-room with his wife on his arm and to see the four candlesticks on the table with pink shades, and the two tall parlour-maids with trained steps and looking so distinguished in their white caps and aprons.

CHAP. VI.

"WON'T you come round the garden?"

She knew that he cared very little for flowers, but she always hoped to win his love for her garden.

"If you would only work in the garden a little, Ned, you'd soon begin to distinguish between honesty and rocket."

"Well, Ellen, I can tell the difference if you give me time to think; you always have to think whether a sonata is by Beethoven or Mozart—I don't. Now which prelude is this?" And he began to whistle.

"I'll tell you when we get into the house. I can tell better if I hear it on the instrument. Now look at these flowers and tell me what they are."

"Give me time—give me time, and I'll work it out. . . . Monkshood."

"No, delphinium."

"Now, Ellen, I wish you wouldn't call larkspur delphinium. All the beauty of the flowers goes once you change their lovely English names to Latin ones."

Ned was often in doubt whether the flowers he was looking at were columbines or Canterbury bells—both names were beautiful, but Canterbury bells by far the more beautiful. "Canterbury is the beautifullest of names, and bells are always beautiful, especially on Sunday morning; it is delicious to hear them choiring over an English landscape."

"Why not over an Irish?"

Ned admired the instinct which drew her from flower to flower, for she seemed to divine the wants of every flower and to know where she would find the caterpillars and the snails. She carried a basket on her arm into which she put these gnawing insects. It was not a basket of "Indian woof," and she did not tell Ned to carry the insects into distant woods "far aloof." Her sensibilities were not so fine as Shelley's, and she was content to let Ned trample upon the caterpillars, that had eaten up the hollyhocks.

"In another month the poppies will be over everything," she said, "and my pansies are beautiful. See

these beautiful yellow pansies! But you're not looking at my garden."

"Yes, I am taking it all in, but I was thinking just then of that apple-tree, there is no finer one in Ireland, it is as large as a house; the branches shoot straight out making as it were a little roof; and when there is the moon, yellow as a nectarine among the boughs——"

"And only by comparing one thing with another do you seem to be able to appreciate Nature. If you think the blue of the lobelia reminds you of my eyes, try to remember its name."

"To-night the moon is much farther away than when it lay——"

"Like a nectarine among the boughs of an apple-tree."

"Now the moon is quite different, sailing away up there in icy scorn."

"Much purer."

"Nevertheless, I didn't kiss you that night."

"But you'll kiss me to-night," and she raised her face to his.

"And which moon do you like the better? The cold spiritual moon or the nectarine moon?"

"My dear Ned, the moon is never like a nectarine—the moon is just the moon."

"And nothing but the moon, whereas you have a soul." He put his arm about her waist; they passed from the garden through the wicket, moved by a desire to see the long fields and the woods sloping down to the shore.

"Only the grey sky," he said, "with the fleeting moon in it, and a great stream of white light striking across the sea past the last rocks of that lonely little headland. How small the world is compared with the sky to-night!"

"But the earth is always small compared to the sky."

"Not always, Ellen."

And they turned their faces up the grey hillside, going up a little path which led them past a ruined church and

over a stream which was difficult to cross, the stepping-stones being placed crookedly. A little farther on they stopped to admire a group of three lonely ash-trees, and he wondered if Ellen was as sensible as he to the mystery of the cattle moving through the furze. "They seem," he said, "nearer the earth than human beings are." And he asked Ellen to sympathize with him in the idea that there are not many things in the universe, but one thing divided indefinitely. And when they had seated themselves on a Druid stone their talk drifted from themselves to Ireland, to the time that the primitive races had assembled round the very stone on which they were sitting for some rite; and Ned listened, hearing a long story from Ellen's lips, feeling all the while that he had always aspired to a grave, well-mannered woman who was never ridiculous, and despite her superstitions she was not ridiculous.

"We shall always think the same—do you not feel that?"

"You're thinking," she said, "of America; thinking that if you go there you'll come back with different ideas about Ireland and about me. Isn't that what you were thinking?"

"In a way—one doesn't like to break the spell, and I feel that a spell is upon me."

"Ned, you mustn't give way to superstition. You must do what you think right."

"But I don't know that I think any one thing more right than another."

"Yes, you do, Ned."

"What I am considering is the hardship it imposes upon me to leave you at such a time. We have been married hardly more than a year, and I am asked to leave you, for if I go to America it will be for at least three months—for four, perhaps."

"Of course, if you thought that you would think of

any other woman, that you would not be faithful to me and faithful to Ireland, dear——"

"My dear Ellen, there is no question of that. I am thinking of myself and yourself."

"If you succeed in America you will come back the first man in Ireland."

"Even so—what is that to me or you? It would be more natural for you to be sorry I am going."

"I am sorry you are going, of course, Ned; but if you come back a great success I shall be very glad."

"You will be very lonely."

"Very likely . . . but, Ned, I shall not be looking very well for the next two months."

"You mean on account of the baby? The next few months will be a trying time for you, and I should like to be with you. Would you like to go into the house now?"

"No, dear, the night is very beautiful," and, passing through the wicket, they sat down to rest on the seat under the apple-tree.

"But you don't look as if you wished me to stay."

"Yes, Ned, I do—I shall miss you. Of course, it will be very lonely here without you, but perhaps it will be better. When you come back, I shall have got back my figure, and perhaps you will like me better than ever."

"You have so little confidence in my love, Ellen, that you only wish me to see you when you are looking . . . charming."

"It seems to me, Ned, that if a woman wishes to retain a man's love when she marries such a man as you, he must only see her when——"

"But that isn't like you at all. My dear Ellen, you're crying! What is the meaning of these tears?"

"I don't know, Ned. It is foolish of me, and under this apple-tree, too, where we have spent so many pleasant hours."

"In about six years there will be one who will appreciate the tree as we have never appreciated it. I can see the little chap running after the apples."

"But, Ned, it may be a girl."

"Then it will be like you, dear."

Ned shook the boughs, and their apple-gathering seemed portentous.

"The sound of apples falling in the dusk and a new life coming into the world."

"But you're sorry to leave me?" she answered, conscious of some estrangement, as she divined that he was glad he had obtained her consent to go to America.

"Of course, I'm sorry to leave you, but you say it is my duty to go—and I suppose it is, though for the moment I am not conscious of any duty but you." They walked into the house together, Ned a little unhappy, because he felt he was not as sincere with Ellen as he wished to be.

CHAP. VII.

HE was thinking in Chicago that there is no end to politics, when a knock came to the door—a telegram from home.

"A new life has come into the world," he said. And though it does cost a shilling a word, they might have let me know how she is! There is no answer," he said to the boy, and fell to thinking of her gem-like eyes, her pretty oval face, and her red hair scattered about her pillow. At first he was not certain whether the baby was lying by the side of the mother, but now he saw his child, and thrilled with a sense of wonder—for birth and death never cease to be wonderful. "Never," he said; and he marvelled at his vision, so clear was it. He could see his wife and child in the room he knew so well, the curtains with the fruit pattern upon them, the pale wallpaper

with roses climbing up a trellis, and pretty blue ribbons intervening between each line of roses. He knew the odour of the room well, and the sensation of the carpet; he could see the twilight, and the bulky nurse passing to and fro, and began to wonder if his child were like him or like his mother—probably like both, and then his eyes went to the clock. The notes of his speech were upon the table; but he found great difficulty in rousing himself out of his chair; it was so pleasant to lie there, thinking of his wife, of his home, of his child. And it did not seem as if he could speak at a meeting that night.

As he considered the wording of the telegram he must send to the chairman, he saw his wife take the baby and put it to her breast, and her breast was very dear to him. He had often thought of Ellen as a beautiful marble—very rarely as a mother. But he was due at the meeting in about twenty minutes; the notes of his speech lay on the table; he gathered them up, put them in his pocket, and drawing a sheet of paper towards him he began a letter to his wife. He wished to tell her . . . he sought for turns of phrases that would veil his thought becomingly from himself and from Ellen. But he must tell her that she would find no difficulty in getting goat's milk at the foot of the Dublin mountains, or a peasant woman. "The curve of your breast is worth all the world to me," he was about to write, but he decided that it would be better to omit all bodily appreciations, and closed his letter. No sooner was it posted than he was beset by qualms of conscience, and he went to the meeting wondering what Ellen would think of his letter, fearing it would shock and trouble her; she would remember his admiration of her with pleasure, but she would consider the rights of the child.

He was beset by uneasy thought during the next few days, and when the tenth day came—the day his letter would probably be handed to her—he was thinking how

he might remedy his mistake by telegram. He refrained fortunately. A telegram would have added to her distress, which was already very great. She had been suckling her baby for several days before Ned's letter arrived. It had given her pleasure to suckle her baby, and Ned's order that she should pass her child on to another and consider her personal charm for him affrighted her, and she could not restrain her tears. Her tears flowed again; and when she told the nurse her husband's wishes, the nurse was sorry that Mrs. Carmady had been troubled, for she was still very weak. At that moment the child began to cry for milk; Ellen put him to her little cup-like breast, and as he drew it, tears fell upon him. The doctor, however, did not think there was anything strange in Ned's letter, even thought she had suckled her baby long enough, and spoke with so much assurance that Ellen was soothed. But he had not left her very long before she felt that she must have theological opinion as well, and scribbled a letter to Father Brennan, asking him to come to see her as soon as he conveniently could. He did not, however, side with her against the doctor; he even refused to express any opinion on the subject, whether a mother was justified in suckling her child herself or in passing it over to a foster-mother. It was entirely a question for the doctor, and if the doctor advised such a course, she would be wrong not to follow it.

Ellen felt she had been misunderstood, and tried to tell the priest that Ned's letter had been inspired by his admiration of her breasts, but the priest either would not or could not understand, and this troubled her; she burst into tears again, and the nurse came in and said she had spoken enough this afternoon. The priest bade her good-bye, and the doctor came soon after. There was some whispering, and Ellen guessed that he had brought a foster-mother with him; she wept again, and turned her head aside so that she might not see her baby fix his lips

on the foster-mother's breast. But very soon the wet-nurse was accepted, and cheerfully; the priest had told her that she had better follow the doctor's orders, and glancing down her chemise she wondered if she were the same as before.

"Nurse, what do you think?"

The nurse assured her that she could perceive no difference, but when they put on her stays it was quite clear that she had grown stouter. "I'm quite a little mother." The nurse said her figure would come back all right, and she hoped Ned would not be disappointed with her. She did not expect him for a month, and in a month she would be able to meet him as slight and graceful as she had ever been. He liked her in light dresses, so she chose a pretty flowered dress and tied it with a blue sash. "I never wore so becoming a hat," she said; and stood at the end of the platform, waiting for the train to come up.

Ned was in one of the end carriages, and she would have liked him to jump out of the carriage into her arms; the first kiss was, however, none the worse for the little delay, and they walked on in silence, unable to speak, so intense was their happiness; it welled up and overflowed when Ned stopped at the corner of the road to gather some honeysuckle, and pinned the blossoms into his wife's gown; and then, while admiring the gown, the hat, and her pretty red hair, he remembered the letter he had written in answer to her telegram.

"I've had many qualms about the letter I wrote you in answer to your telegram. After all, a child's right upon the mother is the first right of all. I wrote the letter in a hurry, and hardly knew what I was saying."

"We got an excellent nurse, Ned, and the boy is doing very well."

"So you said in your letters. But after posting my letter I said to myself: 'If it causes me trouble how much more will it cause her!'"

"Your letter did trouble me, Ned. I was feeling very weak that morning and the baby was crying for me, and I didn't know what to do, so I sent up a note to Father Brennan, asking him to come and see me, and he came down and told me that I was quite free to give my baby to a foster-mother. The sanction of the Church, Ned . . ."

"The sanction of the Church! What childish nonsense is this?" he said. "The authority of a priest. So it was not for me, but because a priest . . ."

"But, Ned, there must be a code of morality, and these men devote their lives to thinking out one for us."

She was charming in her flowered dress, and she had not forgotten to wear a blue veil; but her beauty could not crush the anger out of him, and she never seemed farther from him—not even when the Atlantic divided them.

"Those men devote their lives to thinking out a code of morality for us! You submit your soul to their keeping; and what remains of you when you have given over your soul?"

"But, Ned, why this outbreak? You knew I was a Catholic when you married me."

"Yes, and I'm sorry, Ellen, for losing my temper. But it is only in Ireland that women submit themselves, body and soul. It is extraordinary! It is beyond human reason!"

They walked on in silence, and Ned tried to forget that his wife was a Catholic.

"Shall I go upstairs and see the baby, or will you bring him down?"

"I'll bring him down."

And it was a great lump of white flesh with blue eyes and a little red down on its head that she carried in her arms.

"And now, Ned, forget the priest and admire your boy!"

"He seems a beautiful boy and healthy and sleepy."

"I took him out of his bed, but he never cries. Nurse said she never heard of a baby that didn't cry. Do you know I'm sometimes tempted to pinch him to see if he can cry?"

She sat absorbed, looking at the baby, and she was so beautiful and so intensely real at that moment that Ned began to forget that she had given the child out to nurse because the priest had told her that she might do so without sin.

"I called him after you, Ned. It was Father Stafford who baptized him."

"So he has been baptized!"

"He wasn't three days old when he was baptized."

"Of course, he could not have gone to heaven if he hadn't been baptized."

"Ned, I don't think it kind of you to say these things to me. You never used to say them."

"I am sorry, Ellen. I'll say no more, and I am glad it was Father Stafford who baptized him. He is the most sensible priest we have. If all the clergy were like him I should find it easier to believe."

"But religion has nothing to do with the clergy. It is quite possible to think the clergy foolish, and yet to believe that the religion is the true one."

"I like the clergy far better than their religion, and believe them to be worthy of a better one. I like Father Stafford, and you like having a priest to dinner—let us ask him."

She liked clerical gossip, and she told him that the new church was finished, and that Biddy heard the saints singing in the window.

"So now we have a local saint."

"Yes, and miracles."

"But do you believe in miracles?"

"I don't know. I shouldn't like to say. One isn't obliged to believe in them!"

"I'm sure you would enjoy believing in Biddy."

"Oh, Ned! how aggressive you are—and the very day you come back!"

"If I am, I'm sorry. Come, sit upon my knee, and forget your priests and all that concerns them, and everything except me, and in return I shall forget all but the cream colour and delightful roundness of your neck."

As she came to Ned the faint cloud of resentment which still lingered in her face provoked his laughter, for he guessed what was passing in her mind.

"You wouldn't have me different, but you would prefer me not to speak about priests?"

"No, darling, you shouldn't use the word 'priest,' but 'religion'—you confuse the two. But this is not the moment for theological discussion."

She did not know whether she hated him or loved him, and the thought crossed his mind that there was something of the religious prig in her—but no matter—and this depreciation was swept away, for he found her the same enticing and winning sensuality as he had left in Ireland when he went away to America.

It flattered him to watch her passionate nature overcome her prejudices, and he assured her next morning, as she stepped out of her bath, that she had lost none of her beauty—that her baby had robbed not a line of it. She would have preferred him not to have spoken of the baby, but she was glad to think that she had lost nothing in his eyes, and that morning he was so much in love with her that he glanced down her newspaper and read of Ireland's fidelity to her religion, her devotion to her priests, without a muttered word. He read of the profession of Irish nuns in France, of Kilmessan Cathedral bazaar, of meetings at which the chair was always taken by a worthy

priest or a brilliant young curate, and of the old Irish castle and its domain that had just become ecclesiastical property, without anger, for his mind was filled with memories of his wife's beauty; he could not get her out of his head, and after breakfast they walked round the garden, their arms linked, she boring him a little with her flowers, for he was thinking of the misfortune that the post had brought to him. It seemed hard to leave her the very first day, but he must go to Dublin. He would return in the evening, but he didn't want to be separated from her, though the separation was no more than a few hours.

"I shall look forward to see you at the station," he said; and at six o'clock they walked down the broad, sunny road once again, thinking of the love-night that awaited them; and for three months the mould of her body absorbed him, till, surprised at his constant worship of one idol, he began to look upon himself as a perfect lover, living in a tranquil isle of contentment, blue and waveless seas surging around its shores, gentle breezes rocking its groves, breezes that would never again wax and veer. As a man in complete health forgets death for a while and then remembers suddenly that the day of his death is certain to come, he asked himself as he hurrried to the station in a moment of supreme content if Ellen's beauty would ever cease to give him pleasure. The question interested him, and he asked himself if it were possible that she whom he loved so utterly, who meant so much to him, at whose least touch he trembled, would become to him more trite and commonplace than any other woman. Of course it was possible. The mind is always remoulding, remaking the body, and Ellen's mind seemed less interesting than it used to be; she was becoming more and more a slave to the priest; we go forward or go back—she was retrograde, and in ten years, all her

beauty dead, she would become—— But he didn't like to think what she would become.

It might be argued that her religion was her own concern, but it was his too, for it afflicted him; it always had, and now there was a reason why the affliction should lie upon him very heavily. He was thinking of his little son, who would be sent to confession presently—in about five years the breaking-in would begin. But in five years their love-story would be over and done, and he would be able to resist her. A little frightened at the thought, he began to think instead of what he would say at the meeting. And it was at this meeting he became conscious of the missionary within him, and returned home thinking of his political work rather than of his wife. "A man's heart must be in his work if he is to do it well," she said, and tried to get Ned to tell her about his hopes for the fulfilment of his projects. But he dropped from particular into general terms, and spoke of social organization and the like, and she felt a little disappointed that he did not take her into his confidence. It would have pleased her to hear him express his old regrets at leaving her when he went away next morning, but he went away quite cheerfully, and she returned to her house remembering his complaints of the long drives on outside cars and the tedium of his evenings in inn parlours. "He no longer objects to inn parlours," she said; and on his return she asked him to tell her of the beds he had slept in, and was surprised to hear him describe them all as excellent. "And the food?" she would venture to ask. "The food was all right—the Irish inn is improving." She kept herself from saying, though the words came to her lips, "Improved within the last three months." "But I am delighted to get home," he said, putting his arm about her, as if he had guessed her thoughts.

"Where is baby?"

She liked him to be fond of his baby, but——

"Baby is asleep."

"Let us go into the garden and show me your flowers."

His astuteness annoyed her, and after dinner she took up her sewing, for he was too tired to talk to her about his work. She could see that he was watching her; and after watching her for some little while he went to the piano, and she wondered how he could care to play Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, hour after hour—Bach—all the old masters. "How is it, Ned," she said, "you never seem to talk to me now?" He answered that the music rested his brain.

"But, darling, do you think I am neglecting you? It isn't true—come and sit upon my knee."

The request to come and sit upon his knee angered her, for it seemed to her that her husband was aware that a change had come into their lives, and she did not know if she were glad or sorry he did not come to her room that night.

One day she asked him at what he was smiling, and he answered quite candidly:

"At my own good fortune in having this house to return home to, and a beautiful wife to kiss when I return. My life is infinitely agreeable; you have made it so, Ellen, and from end to end.

"Don't you understand what I mean?" he asked, a little annoyed at her unresponsiveness. "I just ask you, how could a man be else than pleased? Never was there a more beautiful summer than the one we are coming to the end of. And this morning is beautiful enough to make anybody happy. The sunlight is bewitching—don't you love the sun, Ellen?" He saw that she was annoyed, and half guessed the cause of it, and to revenge himself he pretended not to see her clouded face. "Such a contrast to the day," he said to himself. "Everything," he continued, "seems to have been done for us. You are the

prettiest woman in County Dublin, and I don't think there is a prettier house, or a prettier dress than the one you are wearing."

"God has been very good, it is true."

"Well, am I not giving Him thanks?"

"You seem to look upon me and your house like a little work of art planned out by yourself—a work of which you are not a little proud," she answered, laughing.

"You think," he replied, much amused, "that I look upon our house as a sort of larder, and you as a dainty morsel."

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Ned."

"The idea was yours—that as soon as I have had a snack I put the cover down and go away saying, 'Now that is all right—that is safe for another week.'"

The train came in; he recalled the angry look he had seen gather in her face; and the newspaper dropped on his knees. . . . He knew that she read his speeches, and if she read them she must have noticed their anti-clerical tone. True, he was not well reported, the most important parts of his speeches were omitted, and for these omissions he looked upon the reporters and editors as his friends, for he was still in love with his wife, and felt that the sensual knot was not yet untied—not even loosened, and that many a month would have to pass, perhaps years, before he would find himself in the open air of the world, free again. If she read his speeches this freedom might come to him at once, for woman though she was—and a passionate one into the bargain—he felt sure that his opinions, as soon as they were fully realized by her, would cleave their love as a hatchet cleaves the wood. He had tried to live without opinions for her sake, and had failed; his little son would fall into the priest's maw—the whole country was in it—and he remembered how years ago he had watched a snake trying to swallow a frog. The frog seemed to acquiesce, but when half of

his body was down the snake's gullet he began to bestir himself and had managed to escape. The snake renewed the attack the next day and many succeeding days, the frog escaping always at the last moment; but a day came when the weary frog delayed a little too long and Ned saw him disappear. He was sorry for him, just as he was now sorry for the poor people that the priests were swallowing—body and soul. Ned told the story in his speech and the parable was understood by some.

He had an anti-clerical backing in the towns, and one day spoke so plainly that he felt it would be better to tell Ellen what he had said than to allow her to read his speech unprepared. But if he were to tell her she would not come upon his knee; and if he did not tell her, she would read the report of his speech, and she might not even come to the station to meet him or accompany him to the station in the morning.

"I'm afraid our lives are at a crisis," he said, looking out of the window.

But she was waiting for him on the platform, and looked so pretty as she stood in the sun, her parasol aslant, that he began to regret he had not postponed his attack on the priests.

His greetings were always cordial, but this evening she thought his greeting more cordial, more affectionate; it was more like the Ned she remembered—the Ned that she knew. But he did not take her in his arms, though there was nobody about, and while she wondered at his indifference, she noticed that he was answering her perfunctorily.

"What is the matter, dear? I hope you are not disappointed."

"No, the meeting was well enough. There was a great number of people present, and my speech was well received."

"I am glad of that," she said. "But what is the matter, Ned?"

"Nothing. I was thinking about my speech. I hope it will not be misunderstood. People are so stupid, and some will understand it as an attack on the clergy, whereas it is nothing of the kind."

"Well," she said, "if it isn't, it will be different from your other speeches."

"How is that?"

"All your speeches lately have been an attack upon the clergy, direct or indirect. I dare say many did not understand them, but anyone who knows your opinions can read between the lines."

"If you had read between the lines, Ellen, you would have seen that I have been trying to save the clergy from themselves. I am only pleading for the harmless and the necessary laity."

"You see, Ned, I am hardly more to you now than any other woman. You come here occasionally to spend a day or two with me. Our married life has dwindled down to that. You play with the baby and you play the piano, and you write your letters. I don't know what you are writing in them. You never speak to me of your ideas. I know nothing of your politics."

"I haven't spoken about politics much lately, Ellen, because I thought you had lost interest in them."

"I've lost interest in nothing that concerns you. I've not spoken about politics because I know quite well that my ideas don't interest you any longer. You're absorbed in your own ideas. You sleep now in the spare room. We are divided, body and soul."

"But I sometimes come to see you in your room, Ellen."

"Sometimes," she said sadly, "but that isn't my idea of marriage, nor is it the custom of the country, nor is it what the Church wishes."

"I think, Ellen, you are very unreasonable, and you are generally so reasonable."

"Well, don't let us argue any more," she said. "We shall never agree, I'm afraid."

"If I had only known it was going to turn out so disagreeable as this," Ned said to himself, "I should have held my tongue." And he was sorry for having displeased Ellen, so pretty did she look in her white dress and her hat trimmed with China roses; and though he did not care much for flowers, he liked to see Ellen among her flowers; he liked to sit with her under the shady apple-tree. The hollyhocks were making a fine show up in the air, and hoping the garden would distract her attention from his ideas, he led her across the sward to their seat. But instead of speaking to him about the flowers, as was her wont, she asked him if he would like to see the child.

"I've kept him out of bed thinking you might like to see him."

"Yes," he said, "go fetch the baby and I will shake the boughs and he'll run after the apples."

"Differences of opinion arise," he said to himself, "for the mind changes and desire wanes, but the heart is always the same. And what an extraordinary bond a child is," he added, seeing Ellen leading the little boy across the sward.

The quarrels of the day died down, the evening grew more beautiful under the boughs, and this intimate life round their apple-tree was strangely intense, and it grew more and more intense as the light died. Every now and then the child came to show them an apple he had picked up, and Ned said: "He thinks he has found the largest apples that have ever been." The secret of their lives seemed to approach, and at every moment they expected to hear it. An apple fell with a thud, the stars came out, the tired child came to his mother and asked to be taken on her lap. Ned carried his son, now half asleep, into the house, and they undressed him together, having forgotten, seemingly, their differences of opinion.

But after dinner, when they were alone in the drawing-room, their relations grew strained again. Ned wanted to explain to Ellen that his movement was not anti-clerical, but he could see she did not wish to hear. He watched her take up her work, and wondered what he could say to persuade her, and after a while he went into his study, fetched his book, and very soon forgot Ellen. But she had not forgotten him, and seeing that his love for her had been absorbed by the book, she stuck her needle in her work, folded it up, and put it into the work-basket.

"I am going to bed, Ned." His face told her that he had returned from a world in which she had no part. "You prefer your book to me. Good-night."

She had never spoken to him so rudely before. But there was no use going after her, he didn't wish to go after her, and obedient to his humour he turned to the piano. He hadn't heard any music for days, and, like a thirsty man to a well-head, he turned to Bach. The piano would reach her bedroom! Well, if it did—he hadn't played Bach for weeks, and he wanted to play Bach. He knew the piano would annoy her . . . would keep her awake. But sleep was far from her eyes. It annoyed her that he should go to the piano the moment she left him, and that he should play Bach; for he knew that Bach did not interest her; and had it not seemed undignified to do so, she would have sent down word that she would be obliged if he would stop playing.

As she undressed she lost control over herself, and lying in bed it seemed to her that Ned had hidden himself in a veil of kindness and good humour, and that the man she had married was a man without moral qualities; a man who would leave her without resentment, without regret, who would say "Good-bye" to her as to some brief habit.

She could hear Bach's interminable twiddles, and they

exasperated her nerves; she wept through many preludes and fugues; and later she must have heard the fugues in a dream; for, when the door opened (it passed over the carpet softly) she started out of a doze, and heard Ned saying he hoped the piano had not kept her awake. She heard him lay the candle on the table, and come over to her bedside, and, leaning over her, he begged her to turn round and speak to him.

"My poor little woman, I hope I have not been cross with you this evening."

She turned away petulantly. But he took her hand and held it, and whispered to her, and gradually tempted her out of her anger, and taking some of her red hair from the pillow, he kissed it. She still kept her head turned from him, but she could not keep back her happiness, and at last, raising herself up in the bed, she said: "Oh, Ned, do you still love me?" And when he came into bed, she slipped down so as lie upon his breast, and they fell asleep thinking of the early train he would have to catch in the morning. But this was their last fit of happiness, for next day she was guilty of a great indiscretion—she went into Ned's study to see what the time was. She was curious, too, to know what were the books Ned was always reading, but she thought she could go into the study without looking at the books. She fixed her eyes on the clock, trying to keep her eyes from the bookcase. But in spite of herself she looked. The books were there; they had been thrust so far back that she could not read the name of the writer. Well, it did not matter; she did not care to know the name of the writer—Ned's room interested her more than the books. There was his table covered with his papers, and the thought passed through her mind that he might be writing the book he had promised her not to write. What he was writing was certainly for the printer, for he was writing on only one side of the paper—and one of these days what he was writing

would be printed; but it would not be right or honourable for her to look into her husband's private papers, and she hoped she would go out of the study without reading them.

The papers in her hands were his notes for the book he was writing, and the title caught her eye: *A Western Thibet.* "So he is writing the book he promised not to write," she said, and her shame at her act was swallowed up in the remembrance that it was her money that was supporting the agitation. They were rich now: her father was dead, all his money had come to her, and she had let Ned do what he liked. She had not cared what happened as long as she kept his love—but he no longer loved her. Two thousand a year of her money was being spent in robbing the people of Ireland of their religion! Maybe thousands of souls would be lost—and through her fault.

Ellen feared money as much as her father had loved it.

"Good heavens!" she murmured to herself. "What am I to do? Father Brennan will tell me." And every moment the temptation to confide her secret became more imperative. She could confide her secret to the priest in confession without betraying Ned. But if the priest told her she must withdraw her money from Ned, her marriage was a broken one, and Ned's career would be broken. . . . And it was she who had brought him into politics. She had often spoken of her money in order to induce him to go into politics, and now it was her money that was forcing her to betray him. She had not thought of confession in her present difficulty as a betrayal, but it was one—and a needless one. Father Brennan could only tell her to withdraw her money, yet she must consult the priest—nothing else would satisfy her. She lacked courage where Ned was concerned, and Father Brennan's advice would give her courage. So soon as she told Ned that she could give him no more money, she would have

to tell him she was acting on the priest's advice, for she could not go on living with him and not tell him everything. A secret would poison her life, and she had no difficulty in imagining how she would remember it; she could see it stopping her suddenly as she crossed the room when she was thinking of something quite different. Her confession to Father Brennan would be easy compared with her confession to Ned. She did not think he would ever love her again. To lose his love might be the cross that God laid upon her, and not to be weak and contemptible in the eyes of God was what she had to think of. The love of one's husband is of this world and temporary, but the love of God is for eternity. . . . All things are in the will of God. And it was God who had sent her into Ned's room. She had been compelled. And now she was compelled again. It was God that was sending her to the priest; for we are but puppets in the hands of God; and she prayed she might be reconciled to His will, only daring to implore His mercy with one "Our Father," and one "Hail Mary." Further imploration would be out of place: she must not insist too much: God was all wisdom, and knew her need better than she. But she would learn from the priest if the love of her husband might be spared her, and she hoped she would be reconciled to His will, even if her child should be taken from her.

During Mass the life of her soul seemed to her to become real, in fact the only reality, and she thought that her confession would be a long one; but on her knees before the priest her soul seemed to vanish, and all her interesting scruples and phases of thought dwindled to almost nothing—she could not put her soul into words, and was ashamed of keeping the priest waiting. But the matter on which she had come to consult him had put words out of her head.

"I am not certain that what I am going to tell you is a

sin, but I consider it as part of my confession," she said at last, and it was with great difficulty that she told him how she had given Ned her money and allowed him to apply it without inquiring into the application. "Since my child was born I have not taken the interest I used to take in politics. I don't think my husband is any longer interested in my ideas, and now he has told me that some kind of religious reformation is necessary in Ireland."

"When did he tell you that?"

"Yesterday. I went to the station to meet him, and he told me as we walked home. For a long time I believed him; I don't mean that he told me falsehoods; he may have deceived himself. Anyhow he used to tell me that though his agitation might be described as anti-clerical, no one could call it anti-religious. But this morning something led me into his room, and I looked through his papers. I dare say I had no right to do so, but I did."

"And you discovered from his papers that his agitation was directed against religion?"

Ellen nodded.

"I cannot think of anything more unfortunate," said the priest.

Father Brennan was a little fat man with small eyes and a punctilious, deferential manner, and his voice was slightly falsetto.

"I cannot understand how your husband can be so unwise. I know very little of him, but I didn't think he was capable of making so grave a mistake. The country is striving to unite itself, and we have been uniting, and now that we have united Ireland, or very nearly, it appears that Mr. Carmady has come from America to divide us again. What can he gain by these tactics? If he tells the clergy that the moment Home Rule is granted an anti-religious party will rise up and drive them out of the country, he will set them against Home Rule, and if the clergy are not in favour of Home Rule

who, I would ask Mr. Carmady, who will be in favour of it? And I will ask you, my dear child, to ask him—I suggest that you should ask him to what quarter he looks for support."

"Ned and I never talk politics; we used to, but that is a long time ago."

"He will only ruin himself. But I think you said you came to consult me about something."

"Yes. You see a very large part of my money is spent in politics, and I am not certain that I shouldn't withdraw my money. It's for that I have come to consult you."

Ellen had been addressing the little outline of the priest's profile, but when he heard the subject on which she had come to consult him he turned, and she saw his large face, round and mottled. A little light gathered in his wise and kindly eyes, and Ellen guessed that he had begun to see his way out of the difficulty, and she was glad of it, for she reckoned her responsibility at a number of souls. The priest spoke very kindly, he seemed to understand how difficult it would be for her to tell her husband that she could not give him any more money unless he promised not to attack the clergy or religion, but she must do so. He pointed out that to attack one was to attack the other, for the greater mass of mankind understands religion only through the clergy.

"You must not only withdraw your money," he said, "but you must use your influence to dissuade him."

"I am afraid," said Ellen, "that when I tell him that I must withdraw my money, and that you have told me to do so——"

"You need not say that I told you to do so."

"I cannot keep anything back from my husband. I must tell him the whole truth," she said. "And when I tell him everything, I shall not only lose any influence

that may remain, but I doubt very much if my husband will continue to live with me."

"Your marriage was a love-marriage."

"Yes, but that is a long time ago. It is four years ago."

"I don't think your husband will separate himself from you, but even so I think——"

"You will give me absolution?"

She said this a little defiantly, and the priest wondered; and she left the confessional perplexed and a little ashamed, and very terrified.

There was nothing for her to do in Dublin; she must go home and wait for her husband. He was not coming home until evening, and she rode her bicycle home wondering how the day would pass, thinking the best time to tell him would be after dinner, when he left the piano. If he were very angry with her she would go to her room. He would not go on living with her, she was sure of that, and her heart seemed to stand still when she entered the house, and saw the study-door open and Ned looking through the papers.

"I have come back to look for some papers," he said. "It is very annoying. I have lost half the day." And he went on looking among his papers, and she could see that he suspected nothing. "Do you know when is the next train?"

She looked out the train for him, and she could see that he suspected nothing, and after he had found the papers he wanted they went into the garden.

She talked of her flowers with the same interest as she had done many times before, and when he asked her to go for a walk with him on the hill she consented, although it was almost unbearable to walk with him for the last time through the places where they had walked so often, thinking that their lives would move on to the end un-

changed; talking of Irish history, their eyes resting on the slender outlines of Howth.

"I shall be back in time for dinner. You will wait dinner a little for me. I may have to come back by a later train."

They walked down the hill together, Ned bidding her good-bye at the garden-gate, saying she had walked enough that day, and she feeling the moment was at hand.

"But, Ned, why are you going to Dublin? You're only going to see people who are anti-Catholic, who hate our religion, who are prejudiced against it."

"But," he said, "why do you talk of these things? We have got on very much better since we ceased to discuss politics together. We're agreed in everything else."

She did not answer for a long while, and then she said:

"But I don't see how we are to avoid discussing them, for it is my money that supports the agitation."

"I never thought of that. So it is. Do you wish to withdraw it?"

"You are not angry with me, Ned? You won't think it mean of me to withdraw my money? How are you going to go on without my money? You see I am wrecking your political career."

"Don't give it another thought, dear. I shall be able to get on without it."

"May I go to the station with you?"

"If you like, only let us talk of something else. Everyone's conscience is his own law, and you must act accordingly."

She trotted by his side, and begged him not to laugh at her when he said that to be truly logical she should turn him out of the house, or at least charge him for his board and lodging.

The intonation of his voice laid her heart waste; she

felt she was done for, and she walked home repeating the words, "I am done for."

As she passed through her garden she saw that her flowers were dying for want of water; but she could not do much work, and though the cans were heavy, they were not as heavy as her heart. She sat down under the apple-tree and remembered her life. Her best days were her school-days. Then life was beginning. Now it seemed to her nearly over, and she only five-and-twenty. She never could take the same interest in politics as she had once taken, nor in books. She felt her intelligence had declined. She was cleverer as a girl than as a woman.

Ned was coming home for dinner, and some time that evening she would have to tell him that she had read his manuscript. She would have liked to meet him at the station, but thought it would be better not to go. The day wore away. Ned was in his best humour, and when she told him why she did not go to the station to meet him, he said it was foolish of her not to have come, for there was nothing he liked better than to stroll home with her in the evening.

"I like Brennan," he said, throwing himself back in his chair. "He is a clever man. Brennan knows as well as I do there's too much money spent upon religion in Ireland. But tell me, did he tell you explicitly that you should give me no more money?"

"Yes. But, Ned——"

"No, no! I am not in the least angry," he said. "I shall always get money to carry on my politics. But what a game it is! And, I suppose, Ellen, you consult him on every detail of your life?"

Her admission that Father Brennan had taken down books and put on his spectacles delighted him.

"Taking down tomes!" he said. "Splendid! Some of these gentlemen would discuss theology with God.

I can see Father Brennan getting up: 'Sire, my reason for entering the said sin as a venial sin——'"

Very often during the evening the sewing dropped from her hands, and she sat thinking. Sooner or later she would have to tell Ned she had read his manuscript. He would not mind her reading his manuscript, and though he hated the idea that anyone should turn to a priest and ask him for his interpretation regarding right and wrong, he had not, on the whole, been as angry as she had expected.

At last she got up. "I am going to bed, Ned."

"Isn't it very early?"

"There is no use my stopping here. You don't want to talk to me; you'll go on playing till midnight."

"Now, why this petulancy, Ellen? I think it shows a good deal of forgiveness for me to kiss you after the way you have behaved."

"I sought Father Brennan's advice under the seal of confession, that was all."

"You don't believe, I suppose, that a priest ever breaks the seal of confession? There are plenty of indirect ways in which he can make use of the information he has gotten from you."

"You have not yet heard how it happened, and perhaps when you do you will think worse of me. I went into your room to see what books you were reading. There was no harm in looking at a book; but you had put the books so far into the bookcase that I couldn't see the name of the author. I took up the manuscript from the table and glanced through it. I suppose I oughtn't to have done that; a manuscript is not the same as a book. And now good-night."

He knew she did not expect him to come to her room that night; and all of a sudden he became aware that the sensual coil was broken: and if he did not follow her now to her room, she would understand that it was broken.

They had come to the end of the second period, and there are three—a year of mystery and passion, and then some years of passion without mystery. The third period is one of resignation. The lives of the parents pass into the children, and the mated journey on, carrying their packs. Seldom, indeed, the man and the woman weary of the life of passion at the same time, and turn instinctively into the way of resignation, like animals. Sometimes it is the man who turns first, sometimes it is the woman. In this case it was the man. He had his work to do, and Ellen had her child to think of, and each must be at his or her task henceforth. And each had a different task. She had thrown, or tried to throw, his pack from his shoulders. She had thwarted him, or tried to thwart him, and he grew angry as he thought of what she had done. She had gone into his study and read his papers; she had then betrayed him to the priest. And he lay awake thinking how he had been deceived by Ellen; thinking that he had been mistaken; that her character was not the noble character he had imagined. But at the bottom of his heart he was true to the noble soul that religion could not extinguish nor even his neglect.

She said one day: "Is it because I read your manuscript and told the priest that you would not come to my room, or is it because you are tired of me?"

"I cannot tell you; and, really, this conversation is very painful. I am engaged upon my work, and I have no thoughts for anything but it."

Another time, when he came from the piano and sat opposite to her, she raised her eyes from her sewing and sat looking at him, and then, getting up suddenly, she put her hands to her forehead, and said to herself: "I will conquer this," and she went out of the room.

And from that day she did not trouble him with love. She obtained control over herself, and he remembered a mistress who had ceased to love him, and whom he had

persecuted a long while with supplications. "She is at one with herself always," he said, and he tried to understand her. "She is one of those whose course through life is straight, and not zigzag, as mine is." He liked to see her turn and look at the baby, and he said: "That love is the permanent and original element of things, it is the universal substance"; and he could trace Ellen's love of her child in her love of him; these loves were not two loves, but one love. And when walking one evening through the shadows, as they spoke about the destiny we can trace in our lives, about life and its loneliness, the conversation verged on the personal, and she said, with a little accent of regret, but not reproachfully:

"But, Ned, you could not live with anyone, at least not always. I think you would sooner not live with anyone."

He did not dare to contradict her; he knew that she had spoken the truth; and Ned was sorry he was giving pain to Ellen, for there was no one that he would have liked to please better. He regretted that his course was zigzag, and he regretted that such a fate should have befallen Ellen. "I am not the husband that would have suited her," he said. And then, after a moment's reflection, "I was her instinct; another would not have satisfied her instinct; constancy is not everything. It's a pity I cannot love her always, for none is more worthy of being loved."

They became friends; he knew there was no danger of her betraying him again. Her responsibility ended with her money, and he told her how the agitation was progressing.

"Oh, Ned, if I were only sure that your agitation was not directed against religion I would follow you. But you will never believe in me."

"Yes, I will believe in you. Come to Dublin with me —come to the meeting. I'd like you to hear my speech."

"I would like to hear you speak, Ned; but I don't think I can go to the meeting."

They were on their way to the station, and they walked some time without speaking. Then, speaking suddenly and gravely, as if prompted by some deep instinct, Ellen said:

"But if you fail, Ned, you will be an outcast in Ireland, and if that happens you will go away, and I shall never see you again."

"Do you think that will happen—can happen?"

"You know it can happen, Ned. I hope it never will."

The train came up to the station; he bade her good-bye, and set himself down in a seat to consider his speech for the last time.

"I shall say everything. The moment is ripe; and the threat to hold out is that Ireland is becoming a Protestant country. Catholics are leaving because there is no joy in Ireland."

He went through the different sections of his speech, introducing the word "joy." Is Ireland going to become joyous? The little stations went by, and the train rolled into Harcourt Street. He called a car.

He was speaking at the Rotunda on the depopulation question, and he said that this question came before every other question. Ireland was now confronted with the possibility that in five-and-twenty years the last of Ireland would have disappeared in America. There were some who attributed the Irish emigration to economic causes; that was a simple and obvious explanation, one that could be understood by everybody; but these simple and obvious explanations are not often, if they are ever, the true ones. The first part of Ned's speech was taken up with the examination of the economic causes, and proving that these were not the origin of the evil. The country was joyless; man's life is joyless in Ireland. It will be said that the Irish are too poor to pay for pleasure,

but they are not too poor to spend fifteen millions a year upon religion. He was the last man in the world who would say that religion was not necessary, but if he were right in saying that numbers were leaving Ireland because Ireland was joyless, he was right in saying that it was the duty of every Irishman to spend his money in making Ireland a joyful country. He was speaking now in the interests of religion. A country is antecedent to religion. To have religion you must first have a country, and if Ireland was not made joyful, Ireland would become a Protestant country in about twenty-five years. In support of this contention he produced figures, showing the rate at which the Catholics were emigrating. But not only were the Catholics emigrating—those who remained were becoming nuns and priests. As the lay population declined, the clerics became more numerous. "Now," he said, "there must be a laity. It is a very commonplace thing to say, but this very commonplace thing is forgotten or ignored, and I come here to plead to-day for the harmless and necessary laity." He knew that these words would get a laugh, and that the laugh would get him at least two or three minutes grace, and these two or three minutes could not be better employed than with statistics, and he produced some astonishing figures. These figures were compiled, he said, by a prelate bearing an Irish name, but whose object was to induce Irishmen and Irishwomen to leave Ireland. This would not be denied, though the pretext on which he wished Irish men and women to leave Ireland would be pleaded as justification. "But of this I shall speak," Ned said, "presently. I want you first to give your attention to the figures which this prelate produced, and with approbation. According to him, there were ten convents and one hundred nuns in the beginning of the century, now there are twelve hundred convents and twenty thousand nuns. The prelate thinks that this is a matter for us to con-

gratulate ourselves on. In view of our declining population I cannot agree, and I regret that prelates should make such thoughtless observations. Again, I have to remind you of a fact that cannot be denied, but which is ignored, and it is that a celibate clergy cannot continue the population, and that, if the population be not continued, the tail of the race will disappear in America in about twenty-five years. . . . Not only does this prelate think that we should congratulate ourselves on the fact that while the lay population is decreasing the clerical population is increasing, but he thinks that Ireland should still furnish foreign missions. No doubt the conversion of the world is a noble work, but my point is that Ireland has done her share in this noble work, and that Ireland can no longer spare one single lay Irishman or cleric or any Irishwoman. If the foreign mission is to be recruited, it must be recruited at the expense of some other country."

Father Murphy stood a little distance on his right, a thick-set man, and as the sentences fell from Ned's lips he could see that Father Murphy was preparing his answer, and he guessed what Father Murphy's answer would be like. He knew Father Murphy to be an adroit speaker, and the priest began in a low key, as Ned had expected him to do. He began by deploring the evils of emigration, and Mr. Carmady deserved their best thanks for attracting popular attention to this evil. They were indebted to him for having done this. Others had denounced the evil, but Mr. Carmady's eloquence had enabled him to do so as well as, perhaps even better than, it had been done before. He complimented Mr. Carmady on the picturesque manner in which he described the emptying of the country, but he could not agree with Mr. Carmady regarding the causes that had brought about this lamentable desire to leave the fatherland. Mr. Carmady's theory was that the Irish priests had succeeded in inducing men to refrain from the commission of sin. Mr. Carmady did not re-

proach the priests with having failed; he reproached them with having succeeded. A strange complaint. The cause of the emigrating, which we all agreed in deploring, was, according to Mr. Carmady, the desire of a sinless people for sin. A strange accusation. The people, according to Mr. Carmady, were leaving Ireland because they wished to indulge in indecent living. Mr. Carmady did not use these words; the words he used were "The joy of life," but the meaning of the words was well known.

"No race," he said, "had perhaps ever been libelled as the Irish race had been, but of all the libels that had ever been levelled against it, no libel had ever equalled the libel which he had heard uttered to-day, that the Irish were leaving Ireland in search of sin.

"They had heard a great deal about the dancing girl, and, according to Mr. Carmady, it would seem that a nation could save itself by jigging."

"He is speaking very well, from his point of view," said Ned to himself.

Father Murphy was a stout, bald-headed man, with small pig-like eyes, and a piece seemed to have been taken from the top of his bony forehead. He was elegantly dressed in broadcloth, and he wore a gold chain, and he dangled his chain from time to time. He was clearly the well-fed, well-housed cleric, who was making, in this world, an excellent living of his advocacy for the next, and Ned wondered how it was that the people did not perceive a discrepancy between Father Murphy's appearance and the theories he propounded. "The idealism of the Irish people," said the priest, "was inveterate," and he settled himself on his short legs and began his peroration.

Father Murphy was followed by a young curate, and the curate began by saying that Mr. Carmady would be able to defend his theories, and that he had no concern with Mr. Carmady's theories, though, indeed, he did not

hear Mr. Carmady say anything which was contrary to the doctrine of our "holy religion." Father Murphy had understood Mr. Carmady's speech in quite a different light, and it seemed to the curate that he, Father Murphy, had put a wrong interpretation upon it; at all events he had put one which the curate could not share. Mr. Carmady had ventured, and, he thought, very properly, to call attention to the number of churches that were being built, and the number of people who were daily entering the orders. He did not wish to criticize men and women who gave up their lives to God, but Mr. Carmady was quite right when he said that without a laity there could be no country. In Ireland the clergy were apt to forget this simple fact—that celibates do not continue the race. Mr. Carmady had quoted from a book written by a priest, in which the distinguished author had said he looked forward to the day when Ireland would be one vast monastery, and the curate agreed with Mr. Carmady that no more foolish wish had ever found its way into a book. He agreed with Mr. Carmady that a real vocation is a rare thing. No country had produced many painters or many sculptors or many poets, and a true religious vocation was equally rare. Mr. Carmady had pointed out that, although the population had diminished, the nuns and priests had increased, and Father Murphy must hold that Ireland must become one vast monastery, and the laity ought to become extinct, or he must agree with Mr. Carmady that there was a point when a too numerous clergy would overbalance the laity.

The curate's argument was taken up by other curates, and Ned began to see he had the youth of the country on his side.

He was speaking at the end of the week at another great meeting, and received even better support at this meeting than he had done at the first, and he returned home wondering what his wife was thinking of his suc-

cess. But what matter? Ireland was waking from the great sleep of Catholicism, and at the next parish it seemed as if the impossible were going to happen and that the Gael was going to be free.

The curates had grievances, and he applied himself to setting the inferior clergy against their superiors, and at meetings he told the curates that they were no better than ecclesiastical serfs: the parish priests dozed in comfortable armchairs and drank champagne, but the curates lived by the wayside and ate and drank very little and did all the work.

One day at Maynooth it was decided that curates had legitimate grievances, and that the people had grievances that were likewise legitimate, and at this great council it was decided that the heavy marriage fees and the baptismal fees demanded by the priests should be reduced, and it seemed as if the clergy were going to be defeated. But an indiscretion on Ned's part gave them the victory. In a moment of excitement he was unwise enough to quote John Mitchel's words, "That the Irish would be free long ago only for their damned souls." A priest wrote to the newspapers pointing out that after these words there could be no further doubt that it was the doctrine of the French Revolution that Mr. Carmady was trying to force upon a Christian people. A bishop wrote saying that the words quoted were fit words for anti-Christ. After that it was difficult for a priest to appear on the same platform, and the curates whose grievances had been redressed deserted, and the fight became an impossible one.

Very soon Ned's meetings were interrupted; disagreeable scenes began to happen, and his letters were not admitted to the newspapers. A great solitude formed about him.

"Well," he said, one evening, "I suppose you have read the account in the paper of my ignominious escape? That is what they called it."

"The wheel," Ellen said, "is always going round. You may be at the bottom now, but the wheel is going round, only there is no use opposing the people in their traditions, in their instinct. . . . And whether the race is destined to disappear or to continue, it's certain that the last Gael will die a Catholic."

"And the Red Indian will die with the scalp at his girdle."

"We won't talk about religion, we'll talk about things we are agreed upon. I have heard you say yourself that you would not go back to America again—that you never enjoyed life till you came here."

"That was because I met you, Ellen."

"I have heard you praise Ireland as being the most beautiful and sympathetic country in the world."

"It is true that I love these people, and I wish I could become one of them."

"You would become one of them, and yet you would tear them to pieces because they are not what you want them to be."

CHAP. VIII.

HE used to go for long walks on the hills, and one day, lying in the furze amid the rough grass, his eyes following the course of the ships in the bay, he remembered his book, *A Western Thibet.*

"Every race," he said, "has its own special genius. The Germans have or have had music; the French and Italians have or have had painting and sculpture; the English have or have had poetry; the Irish had, and, alas! they still have their special genius—celibacy! There is as little free love in Ireland as there is free thought. Men have ceased to care for women, and women have ceased to care for men. Nothing thrives in Ireland but the celibate, the priest, the nun, and the ox."

He laughed a little, and turning on his side and stroking the warm grass with his hand he remembered how the passion of love, the direct inspiration of all the world's art, has been degraded in Ireland, how it has been reduced to the mere act of begetting children.

"There are no bastards in Ireland," he said. "And bastards are the outward sign of inward grace. That which tends to weaken life is the only evil, that which strengthens life is the only good. Nor is there any intellectual passion; there is not even religious passion, only religious formula.

"Ellen said that the last Gael would die a Catholic, and she's right. He will die clinging to the cassock of a priest. But why should I lament? What has he ever done? The Tara brooch and the Cross of Cong and Cormac's Chapel have never been excelled, but Ireland stopped there and suddenly. It seemed as if God had intended the Gael to do something, but had changed His mind; that change happened in the tenth century, and since then the Gael has produced an incredible number of priests and policemen, some of the finest prize-fighters, and a few clever lawyers, but nothing more serious. A kindly sympathetic fellow, that everyone likes, that I love dearly, and that I came to save. But he would not listen. Everyone knows his destiny, and the Gael knows his—and it is to disappear."

His eyes followed the course of the ships in the bay, and he said:

"Was it accident or my own fantastic temperament that brought me back from Cuba, and for what purpose was I brought back? To climb half-way up the lamp-post and to be pulled down by the leg. All Irish saviours have been pulled back—perhaps all saviours are pulled back, and yet I'm unwilling to believe that accident brought me back to Ireland and involved me in the destiny of Ireland for no purpose."

He did not need to take the book from his pocket, he knew the passage well, and repeated it word for word while he watched the ships in the bay.

"We were friends, and we have become strangers one to the other. Ah, yes; but it is so, and we do not wish to hide our strangerhood, or to dissemble as if we were ashamed of it. We are two ships, each with a course and a destination; and our ways may draw together again and we may make holiday as before. And how peacefully the good ships used to lie in the same harbour, under the same sun; it seemed as if they had reached their destination, and it seemed as if there was a destination. But soon the mighty sway of our tasks laid on us as from of old, sundered and drove us into different seas and different zones; and it may be that we shall never meet again, and it may be that we shall meet and not know each other, so deeply have the different seas and suns changed us. The law that is over us decreed that we must become strangers one to the other; and for this we must reverence each other the more, and for this the memory of our past friendship becomes more sacred. Perhaps there is a vast invisible curve and orbit, and our different destinations and ways are parcel of it, infinitesimal segments. Let us uplift ourselves to this thought! But our life is too short and our sight too feeble for us to be friends, except in the sense of this sublime possibility. So let us believe in our stellar friendship, though we must be enemies on earth."

"A deep and mysterious truth," he said, "and I must go—I must go—my Irish life is ended. There is a starry orbit, and Ireland and I are parts of it, and we must believe in our stellar friendship, though we are enemies upon earth."

He wandered on, admiring the large, windless evening and the bright bay. Great men had risen up in Ireland and had failed before him, and it were easy to account for

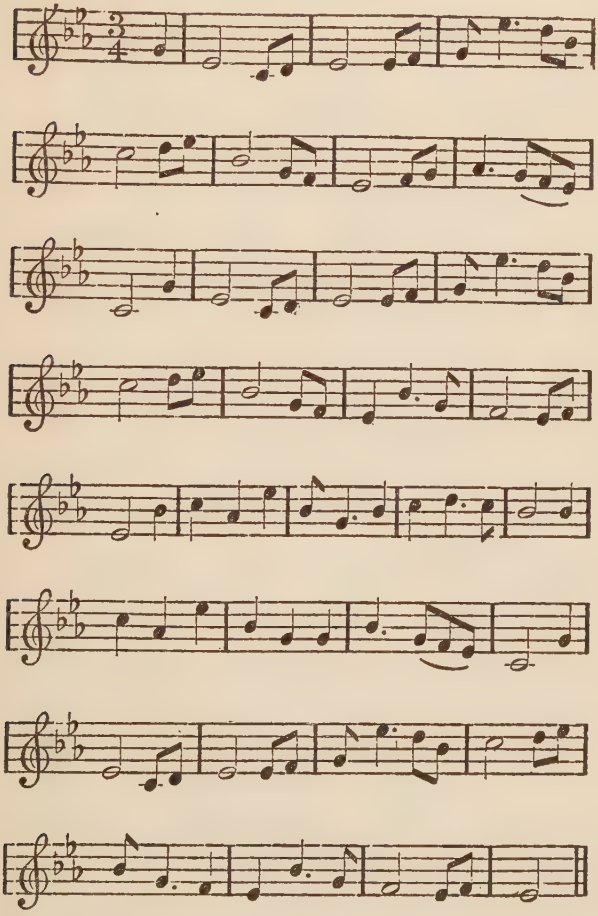
their failure by saying they were not close enough to the tradition of their race, that they had just missed it, but some of the fault must be the fault of Ireland. . . . The anecdote varies, but substantially it is always the same story: the interests of Ireland sacrificed to the interests of Rome.

There came a whirring sound, and high overhead he saw three great birds flying through the still air, and he knew them to be wild geese flying south. . . .

War had broken out in South Africa: Irishmen were going out to fight once again; they were going to fight the stranger abroad when they could fight him at home no longer. The birds died down on the horizon, and the sea lay before him, bright and beautiful, with ships passing into the glowing dusk, and among the hills a little mist was gathering. He remembered the great pagans who had wandered over these hills before scapulars and rosaries were invented. His thoughts came in flashes, and his happiness grew intense. He had wanted to go, and the birds had shown him where he might go. His instinct was to go; he was stifling in Ireland: "A mean, ineffectual atmosphere," he said, "of nuns and rosaries."

A mist was rising, and the lovely outlines of Howth reminded him of pagan Ireland. "They're like music," he said, and he thought of Usheen and his harp. "Will Usheen ever come again?" he said. "Better to die than to live here." The mist thickened—he could see Howth no longer. "The land is dolorous," he said, and as if in answer to his words, the most dolorous melody he had ever heard came out of the mist. "The wailing of an abandoned race," he said. "This is the soul-sickness from which we are fleeing." And he wandered about, calling to the shepherd, and the shepherd answered, but the mist was so thick in the hollows that neither could find the other. After a little while the shepherd began to blow his flute again; and Ned listened, and

repeated the melody over and over again to himself as he walked home, and the moment he entered the drawing-room he said to Ellen, "Don't speak to me; I am going to write something down," and this is what he wrote:



"A mist came on suddenly, and I heard a shepherd playing this folk-tune. Listen to it. Isn't it like the people? Isn't it like Ireland? Isn't it like everything that has happened? It is melancholy enough in this

room, but no words can describe its melancholy on a flute played by a shepherd in the mist. It is the song of the exile; it is the cry of one driven out in the night—into a night of wind and rain. It is night, and the exile on the edge of the waste. It is like the wind sighing over bog-water. It is a prophetic echo and final despair of a people who knew they were done for from the beginning. A mere folk-tune, mere nature, raw and unintellectual; and these raw folk-tunes are all that we shall have done; and by these, and these alone, shall we be remembered."

"Ned," she said at last, "I think you had better go away. I can see you're wearing out your heart here."

"Why do you think I should go? What put that idea into your head?"

"*I* can see you are not happy."

"But you said that the wheel would turn, and that what was lowest would come to the top."

"Yes, Ned; but sometimes the wheel is a long time in turning, and maybe it would be better for you to go away for a while."

"Perhaps; yes, for a while. It was wild geese, Ellen, that put the idea of going to Africa to fight for the Boers into my head."

"You're going to fight for the Boers, Ned?"

"I am going to Africa. You said that the 'wild geese' went to fight the stranger abroad when they could fight him at home no longer. You told me how they went after the siege of Limerick. Do you remember the night you told me the story sitting on the Druid stones?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And I was thinking of Ireland and her ruin on the hill when I heard a whirring sound, and the wild geese flew through the stillness, going south."

"You want to follow them, Ned? And the desire to go is as strong in you as in the wild geese?"

"Maybe; but I shall come back, Ellen."

"Do you think you will, Ned? How can you, if you go to fight for the Boers?"

"There's nothing for me to do here. I want new life. It was you who said that I should go."

"For five years you have been devoted to Ireland, and now you and Ireland are separated like two ships."

"Yes, like two ships. Ireland is still going Romewards, and Rome is not my way."

"You are the ship, Ned, and you came to harbour in Ireland. But you and I are like two ships that have lain side by side in the harbour, and now——"

"And now what, Ellen? Go on."

"It seemed to me that we were like two ships?"

"That is the very thing I was thinking on the hills. The comparison of two ships rose up in my mind on the hill, and then I remembered a passage."

And when he had repeated it, she said:

"So there is no hope for us on earth? We are but segments of a starry curve, and must be content with our stellar friendship. But, Ned, we shall never be enemies on earth. I am not your enemy and never shall be. So we have nothing to think of now but our past friendship. The memory of our past—is all that remains? And it was for that you left America after the Cuban War? There is our child. You love the little boy, don't you, Ned?"

"Yes," he said. "I love the little boy. . . . But you'll bring him up a Catholic. You'll bring him up to love the things that I hate."

"Let there be no bitterness between us to-night, Ned dear. Let there be only love. If not love, affection at least. This is our last night."

"How is that?"

"Because, Ned, when one is so bent upon going, as you are, it is better he should go at once. I give you

your freedom. You can go in the morning, or when you please. But remember, Ned, that you can come back when you please—that I shall always be glad to see you."

They went upstairs and looked for some time on the child, who was sleeping. Ellen took him out of his bed, and she looked very pretty, Ned thought, holding the half-awakened child, and she kept the little quilt about him so that he might not catch cold.

He put his hands into his eyes and looked at his father, and then hid his face in his mother's neck, for the light blinded him, and he wished to go to sleep.

"Let me put him back in his bed," Ned said; and he took his son and put him back, and he kissed him. As he did so, he wondered how it was that he could feel so much affection for his son, and at the same time desire to leave his home.

"Now, Ned, you must kiss me; and do not think I am angry with you for going. I know you are dull here, that you have got nothing further to do in Ireland, but it will be different when you come back."

"And is it possible that you aren't angry with me, Ellen, for going?"

"I am sorry you are going, Ned—in a way; but I should be more sorry to see you stay here and learn to hate me."

One thing Ireland had done for him, and for that he would always be grateful to Ireland—Ireland had revealed a noble woman to him; distance would bring a closer and more intimate appreciation of her.

"You are very wise, Ellen. But why did you read that manuscript?"

"Do you think the reading of the manuscript would have made any difference?"

"You think, Ellen, that the reading of the manuscript was but the surface of our lives."

He left early next morning before she was awake in order to save her the pain of farewells, and all that day in Dublin he walked about, possessed by the great joyful yearning of the wild goose when it rises one bright morning from the warm marshes, scenting the harsh north through leagues of air, and goes away on steady wing-beats. But he did not feel he was a free soul until the outlines of Howth began to melt into the grey drift of evening. There was a little mist on the water, and he stood watching the waves tossing in the mist, thinking that it were well that he had left home. If he had stayed, he would have come to accept all the base moral coinage in circulation; and he stood watching the green waves tossing in the mist, at one moment ashamed of what he had done, at the next overjoyed that he had done it.

THE LAKE

ÉPÎTRE DEDICATOIRE

17 *Août,* 1905.

Mon cher Dujardin,

Il se trouve que je suis à Paris en train de corriger mes épreuves au moment où vous donnez les dernières retouches au manuscrit de *La Source du Fleuve Chrétien,* un beau titre—si beau que je n'ai pu m'empêcher de le " chipper " pour le livre de Ralph Elles, un personnage de mon roman qui ne parait pas, mais dont on entend beaucoup parler. Pour vous dédommager de mon larcin, je me propose de vous dédier *Le Lac.* Il y a bien des raisons pour que je désire voir votre nom sur la première page d'un livre de moi; la meilleure est, peut-être, parce que vous êtes mon ami depuis *Les Confessions d'un Jeune Anglais* qui ont paru dans votre jolie *Revue Indépendante;* et, depuis cette bienheureuse année, nous avons causé littérature et musique, combien de fois! Combien d'heures nous avons passées ensemble, causant, toujours causant, dans votre belle maison de Fontainebleau, si française avec sa terrasse en pierre et son jardin avec ses gazons maigres et ses allées sablonneuses qui serpentent parmi les grands arbres forestiers. C'est dans ce jardin à l'orée de la forêt et dans la forêt même, parmi la mélancolie de la nature primitive, et à Valins où demeurait notre vieil ami Mallarmé, triste et charmant bonhomme, comme le pays du reste (n'est-ce-pas que cette tristesse croît depuis qu'il s'en est allé?) que vous m'avez entendu raconter *Le Lac.*

A Valvins, la Seine coule silencieusement tout le long des berges plates et graciles, avec des peupliers alignés; comme ils sont tristes au printemps, ces peupliers, surtout

avant qu'ils ne deviennent verts, quand ils sont rougeâtres, posés contre un ciel gris, des ombres immobiles et ternes dans les eaux, dix fois tristes quand les hirondelles volent bas! Pour expliquer la tristesse de ce beau pays parsemé de châteaux vides, hanté par le souvenir des fêtes d'autrefois, il faudrait tout un orchestre. Je l'entends d'abord sur les violons; plus tard on ajouterait d'autres instruments, des cors sans doute; mais pour rendre la tristesse de mon pauvre pays là-bas il ne faudrait pas tout cela. Je l'entends très bien sur une seule flute placée dans une île entourée des eaux d'un lac, le joueur assis sur les vagues ruines d'un réduit gallois ou bien normand. Mais, cher ami, vous êtes normand et peut-être bien que ce sont vos ancêtres qui ont pillé mon pays; c'est une raison de plus pour que je vous offre ce roman. Acceptez-le sans le connaître davantage et n'essayez pas de le lire; ne vous donnez pas la peine d'apprendre l'anglais pour lire *Le Lac;* que le lac ne soit jamais traversé par vous! Et parce que vous allez rester fatalement sur le bord de "mon lac" j'ai un double plaisir à vous le dédier. Lorsqu'on dédie un livre, on prévoit l'heure où l'ami le prend, jette un coup d'œil et dit: "Pourquoi m'a-t-il dédié une niaiserie pareille?" Toutes les choses de l'esprit, sauf les plus grandes, deviennent niaiseries tôt ou tard. Votre ignorance de ma langue m'épargne cette heure fatale. Pour vous, mon livre sera toujours une belle et noble chose. Il ne peut jamais devenir pour vous banal comme une épouse. Il sera pour vous une vierge, mieux qu'une vierge, il sera pour vous une demi-vierge. Chaque fois que vous l'ouvrirez, vous penserez à des années écoulées, au jardin où les rossignols chantent, à la forêt où rien ne se passe sauf la chute des feuilles, à nos promenades à Valvins pour voir le cher bonhomme; vous penserez à votre jeunesse et peut-être un peu à la mienne. Mais je veux que vous lisiez cette dédicace, et c'est pour cela que

je l'ai écrite en français, dans un français qui vous est très familier, le mien. Si je l'écrivais en anglais et le faisais traduire dans le langage à la dernière mode de Paris, vous ne retrouveriez pas les accents barbares de votre vieil ami. Ils sont barbares, je le conçois, mais il y a des chiens qui sont laids et que l'on finit par aimer.

Une poignée de mains,

GEORGES MOORE.

PREFACE

THE concern of this preface is with the mistake that was made when *The Lake* was excluded from the volume entitled *The Untilled Field,* reducing it to too slight dimensions, for bulk counts; and *The Lake,* too in being published in a separate volume lost a great deal in range and power, and criticism was baffled by the division of stories written at the same time and coming out of the same happy inspiration, one that could hardly fail to beget stories in the mind of anybody prone to narrative—the return of a man to his native land, to its people, to memories hidden for years, forgotten, but which rose suddenly out of the darkness, like water out of the earth when a spring is tapped.

Some chance words passing between John Eglinton and me as we returned home one evening from Professor Dowden's were enough. He spoke, or I spoke, of a volume of Irish stories; Tourguéniev's name was mentioned, and next morning—if not the next morning, certainly not later than a few mornings after—I was writing *Home Sickness,* while the story of *The Exile* was taking shape in my mind. *The Exile* was followed by a series of four stories, a sort of village odyssey. *A Letter to Rome* is as good as these and as typical of my country. *So On He Fares* is the one that perhaps, out of the whole volume I like the best, always excepting *The Lake,* which, alas, was not included, but which belongs so strictly to the aforesaid stories that my memory includes it in the volume.

In expressing preferences I am transgressing an established rule of literary conduct, which ordains that an author must always speak of his own work with down-

cast eyes, excusing its existence on the ground of his own incapacity. All the same an author's preferences interest his readers, and having transgressed by telling that these Irish stories lie very near to my heart, I will proceed a little further into literary sin, confessing that my reason for liking *The Lake* is related to the very great difficulty of the telling, for the one vital event in the priest's life befell him before the story opens, and to keep the story in the key in which it was conceived, it was necessary to recount the priest's life during the course of his walk by the shores of a lake, weaving his memories continually, without losing sight, however, of the long, winding, mere-like lake, wooded to its shores, with hills appearing and disappearing into mist and distance. The difficulty overcome is a joy to the artist, for in his conquest over the material he draws nigh to his idea, and in this book mine was the essential rather than the daily life of the priest, and as I read for this edition I seemed to hear it. The drama passes within the priest's soul; it is tied and untied by the flux and reflux of sentiments, inherent in and proper to his nature, and the weaving of a story out of the soul substance without ever seeking the aid of external circumstances seems to me a little triumph. It may be that I heard what none other will hear, not through his own fault but through mine, and it may be that all ears are not tuned, or are too indifferent or indolent to listen; it is easier to hear *Esther Waters* and to watch her struggles for her child's life than to hear the mysterious warble, soft as lake water, that abides in the heart. But I think there will always be a few who will agree with me that there is as much life in *The Lake,* as there is in *Esther Waters*—a different kind of life, not so wide a life, perhaps, but what counts in art is not width but depth.

Artists, it is said, are not good judges of their own works, and for that reason, and other reasons, maybe, it is considered to be unbecoming for a writer to praise himself. So to make atonement for the sins I have committed in this preface, I will confess to very little admiration for *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa.* The writing of *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* was useful to me inasmuch that if I had not written them I could not have written *The Lake* or *The Brook Kerith.* It seems ungrateful, therefore, to refuse to allow two of my most successful books into the canon merely because they do not correspond with my æstheticism. But a writer's æstheticism is his all; he cannot surrender it, for his art is dependent upon it, and the single concession he can make is that if an overwhelming demand should arise for these books when he is among the gone—a storm before which the reed must bend—the publisher shall be permitted to print *Evelyn Innes* and *Sister Teresa* from the original editions, it being, however, clearly understood that they are offered to the public only as apocrypha. But this permission must not be understood to extend to certain books on which my name appears—viz., *Mike Fletcher, Vain Fortune, Parnell and His Island;* to some plays, *Martin Luther, The Strike at Arlingford, The Bending of the Boughs;* to a couple of volumes of verse entitled *Pagan Poems* and *Flowers of Passion*—all these books, if they are ever reprinted again, should be issued as the work of a disciple—Amico Moorini I put forward as a suggestion.

G. M.

THE LAKE

CHAP. I.

IT was one of those enticing days at the beginning of May when white clouds are drawn about the earth like curtains. The lake lay like a mirror that somebody had breathed upon, the brown islands showing through the mist faintly, with grey shadows falling into the water, blurred at the edges. The ducks were talking in the reeds, the reeds themselves were talking, and the water lapping softly about the smooth limestone shingle. But there was an impulse in the gentle day, and, turning from the sandy spit, Father Oliver walked to and fro along the disused cart-track about the edge of the wood, asking himself if he were going home, knowing very well that he could not bring himself to interview his parishioners that morning.

On a sudden resolve to escape from anyone that might be seeking him, he went into the wood and lay down on the warm grass, and admired the thickly-tasselled branches of the tall larches swinging above him. At a little distance among the juniper-bushes, between the lake and the wood, a bird uttered a cry like two stones clinked sharply together, and getting up he followed the bird, trying to catch sight of it, but always failing to do so; it seemed to range in a circle about certain trees, and he hadn't gone very far when he heard it behind him. A stonechat he was sure it must be, and he wandered on till he came to a great silver fir, and thought that he spied a pigeon's nest among the multitudinous branches. The nest, if it were one, was about sixty feet from the ground, perhaps more than that;

and, remembering that the great fir had grown out of a single seed, it seemed to him not at all wonderful that people had once worshipped trees, so mysterious is their life, so remote from ours. And he stood a long time looking up, hardly able to resist the temptation to climb the tree—not to rob the nest like a boy, but to admire the two grey eggs which he would find lying on some bare twigs.

At the edge of the wood there were some chestnuts and sycamores. He noticed that the large-patterned leaf of the sycamores, hanging out from a longer stem, was darker than the chestnut leaf. There were some elms close by, and their half-opened leaves, dainty and frail, reminded him of clouds of butterflies. He could think of nothing else. White, cotton-like clouds unfolded above the blossoming trees; patches of blue appeared and disappeared; and he wandered on again, beguiled this time by many errant scents and wilful little breezes.

Very soon he came upon some fields, and as he walked through the ferns the young rabbits ran from under his feet, and he thought of the delicious meals that the fox would snap up. He had to pick his way, for thorn-bushes and hazels were springing up everywhere. Derrin-rush, the great headland stretching nearly a mile into the lake, said to be one of the original forests, was extending inland. He remembered it as a deep, religious wood, with its own particular smell of reeds and rushes. It went further back than the island castles, further back than the Druids; and was among Father Oliver's earliest recollections. Himself and his brother James used to go there when they were boys to cut hazel stems, to make fishing-rods; and one had only to turn over the dead leaves to discover the chips scattered circlewise in the open spaces where the coopers sat in the days gone by making hoops for barrels. But iron hoops were now used instead of hazel, and the coopers worked there no more.

In the old days he and his brother James used to follow the wood-ranger, asking him questions about the wild creatures of the wood—badgers, marten cats, and otters. And one day they took home a nest of young hawks. He did not neglect to feed them, but they had eaten each other, nevertheless. He forgot what became of the last one.

A thick yellow smell hung on the still air. "A fox," he said, and he trailed the animal through the hazel-bushes till he came to a rough shore, covered with juniper-bushes and tussocked grass, the extreme point of the head-land, whence he could see the mountains—the pale south-ern mountains mingling with the white sky, and the western mountains, much nearer, showing in bold relief. The beautiful motion and variety of the hills delighted him, and there was as much various colour as there were many dips and curves, for the hills were not far enough away to dwindle to one blue tint; they were blue, but the pink heather showed through the blue, and the clouds continued to fold and unfold, so that neither the colour nor the lines were ever the same. The retreating and advancing of the great masses and the delicate illumina-tion of the crests would be watched without weariness. It was like listening to music. Slieve Cairn showing straight as a bull's back against the white sky, a cloud filling the gap between Slieve Cairn and Slieve Louan, a quaint little hill like a hunchback going down a road. Slieve Louan was followed by a great boulder-like hill turned sideways, the top indented like a crater, and the priest likened the long, low profile of the next hill to a reptile raising itself on its forepaws.

He stood at gaze, bewitched by the play of light and shadow among the slopes; and when he turned towards the lake again, he was surprised to see a yacht by Castle Island. A random breeze just sprung up had borne her so far, and now she lay becalmed, carrying, without

doubt, a pleasure-party, inspired by some vague interest in ruins, and a very real interest in lunch; or the yacht's destination might be Kilronan Abbey, and the priest wondered if there were water enough in the strait to let her through in this season of the year. The sails flapped in the puffing breeze, and he began to calculate her tonnage, certain that if he had such a boat he would not be sailing her on a lake, but on the bright sea, out of sight of land, in the middle of a great circle of water. As if stung by a sudden sense of the sea, of its perfume and its freedom, he imagined the filling of the sails and the rattle of the ropes, and how a fair wind would carry him as far as the cove of Cork before morning. The run from Cork to Liverpool would be slower, but the wind might veer a little, and in four-and-twenty hours the Welsh mountains would begin to show above the horizon. But he would not land anywhere on the Welsh coast. There was nothing to see in Wales but castles, and he was weary of castles, and longed to see the cathedrals of York and Salisbury for he had often seen them in pictures, and had more than once thought of a walking tour through England. Better still if the yacht were to land him somewhere on the French coast. England was, after all, only an island like Ireland—a little larger, but still an island—and he thought he would like a continent to roam in. The French cathedrals were more beautiful than the English, and it would be pleasant to wander in the French country in happy-go-lucky fashion, resting when he was tired, walking when it pleased him, taking an interest in whatever might strike his fancy.

It seemed to him that his desire was to be freed for a while from everything he had ever seen, and from everything he had ever heard. He merely wanted to wander, admiring everything there was to admire as he went. He didn't want to learn anything, only to admire.

He was weary of argument, religious and political. It wasn't that he was indifferent to his country's welfare, but every mind requires rest, and he wished himself away in a foreign country, distracted every moment by new things, learning the language out of a volume of songs, and hearing music, any music, French or German—any music but Irish music. He sighed, and wondered why he sighed. Was it because he feared that if he once went away he might never come back?

This lake was beautiful, but he was tired of its low grey shores; he was tired of these mountains, melancholy as Irish melodies, and as beautiful. He felt suddenly that he didn't want to see a lake or a mountain for two months at least, and that his longing for a change was legitimate and most natural. It pleased him to remember that everyone likes to get out of his native country for a while, and he had only been out of sight of this lake in the years he spent in Maynooth. On leaving he had pleaded that he might be sent to live among the mountains by Kilronan Abbey, at the north end of the lake, but when Father Conway died he was moved round to the western shore; and every day since he walked by the lake, for there was nowhere else to walk, unless up and down the lawn under the sycamores, imitating Father Peter, whose wont it was to walk there, reading his breviary, stopping from time to time to speak to a parishioner in the road below; he too used to read his breviary under the sycamores; but for one reason or another he walked there no longer, and every afternoon now found him standing at the end of this sandy spit, looking across the lake towards Tinnick, where he was born, and where his sisters lived.

He couldn't see the walls of the convent to-day, there was too much mist about; and he liked to see them; for whenever he saw them he began to think of his sister Eliza, and he liked to think of her—she was his favourite

sister. They were nearly the same age, and had played together; and his eyes dwelt in memory on the dark corner under the stairs where they used to play. He could even see their toys through the years, and the tall clock which used to tell them that it was time to put them aside. Eliza was only eighteen months older than he; they were the red-haired ones, and though they were as different in mind as it was possible to be, he seemed nearer Eliza than anyone else. In what this affinity consisted he couldn't say, but he had always felt himself of the same flesh and blood. Neither his father nor mother had inspired this sense of affinity; and his sister Mary and his brothers seemed to him merely people whom he had known always—not more than that; whereas Eliza was quite different, and perhaps it was this very mutuality, which he could not define, that had decided their vocations.

No doubt there is a moment in every man's life when something happens to turn him into the road which he is destined to follow; for all that it would be superficial to think that the fate of one's life is dependent upon accident. The accident that turns one into the road is only the means which Providence takes to procure the working out of certain ends. Accidents are many: life is as full of accidents as a fire is full of sparks, and any spark is enough to set fire to the train. The train escapes a thousand, but at last a spark lights it, and this spark always seems to us the only one that could have done it. We cannot imagine how the same result could have been obtained otherwise. But other ways would have been found; for Nature is full of resource, and if Eliza had not been by to fire the idea hidden in him, something else would. She was the means, but only the means, for no man escapes his vocation, and the priesthood was his. A vocation always finds a way out. But was he sure if it hadn't been for Eliza that he wouldn't have

married Annie McGrath? He didn't think he would have married Annie, but he might have married another. All the same, Annie was a good, comfortable girl, a girl that everybody was sure would make a good wife for any man, and at that time many people were thinking that he should marry Annie. On looking back he couldn't honestly say that a stray thought of Annie hadn't found its way into his mind; but not into his heart—there is a difference.

At that time he was what is known as a growing lad; he was seventeen. His father was then dead two years, and his mother looked to him, he being the eldest, to take charge of the shop, for at that time it was almost settled that James was to go to America. They had two or three nice grass farms just beyond the town: Patsy was going to have them; and his sisters' fortunes were in the bank, and very good fortunes they were. They had a hundred pounds apiece and should have married well. Eliza could have married whomever she pleased. Mary could have married, too, and to this day he couldn't tell why she hadn't married.

The chances his sister Mary had missed rose up in his mind—why, he did not know; and a little bored by these memories, he suddenly became absorbed in the little bleat of a blackcap perched on a bush, the only one amid a bed of flags and rushes; "an alder-bush," he said. "His mate is sitting on her eggs, and there are some wood-gatherers about; that's what's worrying the little fellow." The bird continued to utter its troubled bleat, and the priest walked on, thinking how different was its evensong. He meditated an excursion to hear it, and then, without his being aware of any transition, his thoughts returned to his sister Mary, and to the time when he had once indulged in hopes that the mills along the river-side might be rebuilt and Tinnick restored to its former commercial prosperity. He was not cer-

tain if he had ever really believed that he might set these mills going, or if he had, he encouraged an illusion, knowing it to be one. He was only certain of this, that when he was a boy and saw no life ahead of him except that of a Tinnick shopman, he used to feel that if he remained at home he must have the excitement of adventure. The beautiful river, with its lime-trees, appealed to his imagination; the rebuilding of the mills and the reorganization of trade, if he succeeded in reorganizing trade, would mean spending his mornings on the wharves by the river-side, and in those days his one desire was to escape from the shop. He looked upon the shop as a prison. In those days he liked dreaming, and it was pleasant to dream of giving back to Tinnick its trade of former days; but when his mother asked him what steps he intended to take to get the necessary capital, he lost his temper with her. He must have known that he could never make enough money in the shop to set the mills working! He must have known that he would never take his father's place at the desk by the dusty window! But if he shrank from an avowal it was because he had no other proposal to make. His mother understood him, though the others didn't, and seeing his inability to say what kind of work he would put his hand to, she had spoken of Annie McGrath. She didn't say he should marry Annie—she was a clever woman in her way—she merely said that Annie's relations in America could afford to supply sufficient capital to start one of the mills. But he never wanted to marry Annie, and couldn't do else but snap when the subject was mentioned, and many's the time he told his mother that if the mills were to pay it would be necessary to start business on a larger scale. He was an impracticable lad and even now he couldn't help smiling when he thought of the abruptness with which he would go down to the river-side to seek a new argument wherewith to confute

his mother, to return happy when he had found one, and sit watching for an opportunity to raise the question again.

No, it wasn't because Annie's relations weren't rich enough that he hadn't wanted to marry her. And to account for his prejudice against marriage, he must suppose that some notion of the priesthood was stirring in him at the time, for one day, as he sat looking at Annie across the tea-table, he couldn't help thinking that it would be hard to live alongside of her year in and year out. Although a good and a pleasant girl, Annie was a bit tiresome to listen to, and she wasn't one of those who improve with age. As he sat looking at her, he seemed to understand, as he had never understood before, that if he married her all that had happened in the years back would happen again—more children scrambling about the counter, with a shopman (himself) by the dusty window putting his pen behind his ear, just as his father did when he came forward to serve some country woman with half a pound of tea or a hank of onions.

And as these thoughts were passing through his mind, he remembered hearing his mother say that Annie's sister was thinking of starting dressmaking in the High Street. "It would be nice if Eliza were to join her," his mother added casually. Eliza laid aside the skirt she was turning, raised her eyes and stared at mother, as if she were surprised mother could say anything so stupid. "I'm going to be a nun," she said, and, just as if she didn't wish to answer any questions, went on sewing. Well might they be surprised, for not one of them suspected Eliza of religious inclinations. She wasn't more pious than another, and when they asked her if she were joking, she looked at them as if she thought the question very stupid, and they didn't ask her any more.

She wasn't more than fifteen at the time, yet she

spoke out of her own mind. At the time they thought she had been thinking on the matter—considering her future. A child of fifteen doesn't consider, but a child of fifteen may *know*, and after he had seen the look which greeted his mother's remarks, and heard Eliza's simple answer, "I've decided to be a nun," he never doubted that what she said was true. From that day she became for him a different being; and when she told him, feeling, perhaps, that he sympathized with her more than the others did, that one day she would be Reverend Mother of the Tinnick Convent, he felt convinced that she knew what she was saying—how she knew he could not say.

His childhood had been a slumber, with occasional awakenings or half awakenings, and Eliza's announcement that she intended to enter the religious life was the first real awakening; and this awakening first took the form of an acute interest in Eliza's character, and, persuaded that she or her prototype had already existed, he searched the lives of the saints for an account of her, finding many partial portraits of her; certain typical traits in the lives of three or four saints reminded him of Eliza, but there was no complete portrait. The strangest part of the business was that he traced his vocation to his search for Eliza in the lives of the saints. Everything that happened afterwards was the emotional sequence of taking down the books from the shelf. He didn't exaggerate; it was possible his life might have taken a different turn, for up to that time he had only read books of adventure—stories about robbers and pirates. As if by magic, his interest in such stories passed clean out of his mind, or was exchanged for an extraordinary enthusiasm for saints, who by renouncement of animal life had contrived to steal up to the last bounds, whence they could see into the eternal life that lies beyond the grave. Once this power was ad-

mitted, what interest could we find in the feeble ambitions of temporal life, whose scope is limited to three score and ten years? And who could doubt that saints attained the eternal life, which is God, while still living in the temporal flesh? For did not the miracles of the saints prove that they were no longer subject to natural laws? Ancient Ireland, perhaps, more than any other country, understood the supremacy of spirit over matter, and strove to escape through mortifications from the prison of the flesh. Without doubt great numbers in Ireland had fled from the torment of actual life into the wilderness. If the shore and the islands on this lake were dotted with fortress castles, it was the Welsh and the Normans who built them, and the priest remembered how his mind took fire when he first heard of the hermit who lived in Church Island, and how disappointed he was when he heard that Church Island was ten miles away, at the other end of the lake.

For he could not row himself so far; distance and danger compelled him to consider the islands facing Tinnick—two large islands covered with brushwood, ugly brown patches—ugly as their names, Horse Island and Hog Island, whereas Castle Island had always seemed to him a suitable island for a hermitage, far more so than Castle Hag. Castle Hag was too small and bleak to engage the attention of a sixth-century hermit. But there were trees on Castle Island, and out of the ruins of the castle a comfortable sheiling could be built, and the ground thus freed from the ruins of the Welshman's castle might be cultivated. He remembered commandeering the fisherman's boat, and rowing himself out, taking a tape to measure, and how, after much application of the tape, he had satisfied himself that there was enough arable land in the island for a garden; he had walked down the island certain that a quarter of an acre could grow enough vegetables to support a hermit,

and that a goat would be able to pick a living among the bushes and the tussocked grass: even a hermit might have a goat, and he didn't think he could live without milk. He must have been a long time measuring out his garden, for when he returned to his boat the appearance of the lake frightened him; it was full of blustering waves, and it wasn't likely he'd ever forget his struggle to get the boat back to Tinnick. He left it where he had found it, at the mouth of the river by the fisherman's hut, and returned home thinking how he would have to import a little hay occasionally for the goat. Nor would this be all; he would have to go on shore every Sunday to hear Mass, unless he built a chapel. The hermit of Church Island had an oratory in which he said Mass! But if he left his island every Sunday his hermitage would be a mockery. For the moment he couldn't see how he was to build a chapel—a sheiling, perhaps; a chapel was out of the question, he feared.

He would have to have vestments and a chalice, and, immersed in the difficulty of obtaining these, he walked home, taking the path along the river from habit, not because he wished to consider afresh the problems of the ruined mills. The dream of restoring Tinnick to its commerce of former days was forgotten, and he walked on, thinking of his chalice, until he heard somebody call him. It was Eliza, and as they leaned over the parapet of the bridge, he could not keep himself from telling her that he had rowed out to Castle Island, never thinking that she would reprove him, and sternly, for taking the fisherman's boat without asking leave. It was no use to argue with Eliza that the fisherman didn't want his boat, the day being too rough for fishing. What did she know about fishing? She had asked very sharply what brought him out to Castle Island on such a day. There was no use saying he didn't know; he never was able to keep a secret from Eliza, and feeling that he must confide in somebody,

he told her he was tired of living at home, and was thinking of building a sheiling on the island.

Eliza didn't understand, and she understood still less when he spoke of a beehive hut, such as the ancient hermits of Ireland lived in. She was entirely without imagination; but what surprised him still more than her lack of sympathy with his dream-project was her inability to understand an idea so inherent in Christianity as the hermitage, for at that time Eliza's mind was made up to enter the religious life. He waited a long time for her answer, but the only answer she made was that in the early centuries a man was either a bandit or a hermit. This wasn't true: life was peaceful in Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries; even if it weren't, she ought to have understood that change of circumstance cannot alter an idea so inherent in man as the hermitage, and when he asked her if she intended to found a new Order, or to go out to Patagonia to teach the Indians, she laughed, saying she was much more interested in a laundry than in the Indians. Her plea that the Tinnick Convent was always in straits for money did not appeal to him then any more than it did to-day.

"The officers in Tinnick have to send their washing to Dublin. A fine reason for entering a convent," he answered.

But quite unmoved by the sarcasm, she replied that a woman can do nothing unless she be a member of a congregation. He shrank from Eliza's mind as from the touch of something coarse, and his suggestion that the object of the religious life is meditation did not embarrass her in the very least, and he remembered well how she had said:

"Putting aside for the moment the important question whether there may or may not be hermits in the twentieth century, tell me, Oliver, are you thinking of marrying Annie McGrath? You know she has rich relations in

America, and you might get them to supply the capital to set the mills going. The mills would be a great advantage. Annie has a good headpiece, and would be able to take the shop off your hands, leaving you free to look after the mills."

"The mills, Eliza! there are other things in the world beside those mills!"

"A hermitage on Castle Island?"

Eliza could be very impertinent when she liked. If she had no concern in what was being said, she looked round, displaying an irritating curiosity in every passer-by, and true to herself she had drawn his attention to the ducks on the river while he was telling her of the great change that had come over him. He had felt like boxing her ears. But the moment he began to speak of taking Orders she forgot all about the ducks; her eyes were fixed upon him, she listened to his every word, and when he finished speaking, she reminded him there had always been a priest in the family. All her wits were awake. He was the one of the family who had shown most aptitude for learning, and their cousin the Bishop would be able to help him. What she would like would be to see him parish priest of Tinnick. The parish was one of the best in the diocese. Not a doubt of it, she was thinking at that moment of the advantage this arrangement would be to her when she was directing the affairs of the convent.

If there was no other, there was at least one woman in Ireland who was interested in things. He had never met anybody less interested in opinions or in ideas than Eliza. They had walked home together in silence, at all events not saying much, and that very evening she left the room immediately after supper. And soon after they heard sounds of trunks being dragged along the passage; furniture was being moved, and when she came downstairs she just said she was going to sleep with Mary.

"Oliver is going to have my room. He must have a room to himself on account of his studies."

On that she gathered up her sewing, and left him to explain. He felt that it was rather sly of her to go away like that, leaving all the explanation to him. She wanted him to be a priest, and was full of little tricks. There was no time for thinking it over. There was only just time to prepare for the examination. He worked hard, for his work interested him, especially the Latin language; but what interested him far more than his aptitude for learning whatever he made up his mind to learn was the discovery of a religious vocation in himself. Eliza feared that his interest in hermits sprang from a boyish taste for adventure rather than from religious feeling, but no sooner had he begun his studies for the priesthood, than he found himself overtaken and overpowered by an extraordinary religious fervour and by a desire for prayer and discipline. Never had a boy left home more zealous, more desirous to excel in piety and to strive for the honour and glory of the Church.

An expression of anger, almost of hatred, passed over Father Oliver's face, and he turned from the lake and walked a few yards rapidly, hoping to escape from memories of his folly; for he had made a great fool of himself, no doubt. But, after all, he preferred his enthusiasms, however exaggerated they might seem to him now, to the commonplace—he could not call it wisdom—of those whom he had taken into his confidence. It was foolish of him no doubt, to have told how he used to go out in a boat and measure the ground about Castle Island, thinking to build himself a beehive hut out of the ruins. He knew too little of the world at that time; he had no idea how incapable the students were of understanding anything outside the narrow interests of an ecclesiastical career. Anyhow, he had had the satisfaction of having beaten them in all the examinations; and if he had cared to go

in for advancement, he could have easily got ahead of them all, for he had better brains and better interest than any of them. When he last saw that ignorant brute Peter Fahy, Fahy asked him if he still put pebbles in his shoes. It was to Fahy he had confided the cause of his lameness, and Fahy had told on him; he was ridiculously innocent in those days, and he could still see them gathered about him, pretending not to believe that he kept a cat-o'-nine-tails in his room, and scourged himself at night. It was Tom Bryan who said that he wouldn't mind betting a couple of shillings that Gogarty's whip wouldn't draw a squeal from a pig on the roadside. The answer to that was: "A touch will make a pig squeal: you should have said an ass!" But at the moment he couldn't think of an answer.

No doubt everyone looked on him as a ninny, and they persuaded him to prove to them that his whip was a real whip by letting Tom Bryan do the whipping for him. Tom Bryan was a rough fellow, who ought to have been driving a plough; a ploughman's life was too peaceful an occupation for him—a drover's life would have suited him best, prodding his cattle along the road with a goad; it was said that was how he maintained his authority in the parish. The remembrance of the day he bared his back to that fellow was still a bitter one. With a gentle smile he had handed the whip to Tom Bryan, the very smile which he imagined the hermits of old time used to wear. The first blow had so stunned him that he couldn't cry out, and this blow was followed by a second which sent the blood flaming through his veins, and then by another which brought all the blood into one point in his body. He seemed to lose consciousness of everything but three inches of back. Nine blows he bore without wincing; the tenth overcame his fortitude, and he had reeled away from Tom Bryan.

Tom had exchanged the whip he had given him for a

great leather belt; that was why he had been hurt so grievously—hurt till the pain seemed to reach his very heart. Tom had belted him with all his strength; and half a dozen of Tom's pals were waiting outside the door, and they came into the room, their wide mouths agrin, asking him how he liked it. But they were unready for the pain his face expressed, and in the midst of his agony he noticed that already they foresaw consequences, and he heard them reprove Tom Bryan, their intention being to dissociate themselves from him. Cowards! cowards! cowards!

They tried to help him on with his shirt, but he had been too badly beaten, and Tom Bryan came up in the evening to ask him not to tell on him. He promised, and he wouldn't have told if he could have helped it. But some explanation had to be forthcoming—he couldn't lie on his back. The doctor was sent for. . . .

And next day he was told the President wished to see him. The President was Eliza over again; hermits and hermitages were all very well in the early centuries, but religion had advanced, and nowadays a steadfast piety was more suited to modern requirements than pebbles in the shoes. If it had been possible to leave for America that day he thought he would have gone. But he couldn't leave Maynooth because he had been fool enough to bare his back to Tom Bryan. He couldn't return home to tell such a story as that. All Tinnick would be laughing at him, and Eliza, what would she think of him? He wasn't such a fool as the Maynooth students thought him, and he realized at once that he must stay in Maynooth and live down remembrance of his folly. So, as the saying goes, he took the bit between his teeth.

The necessity of living down his first folly, of creating a new idea of himself in the minds of the students, forced him to apply all his intelligence to his studies, and he made extraordinary progress in the first years. The

recollection of the ease with which he outdistanced his fellow-students was as pleasant as the breezes about the lake, and his thoughts dwelt on the opinion which he knew was entertained, that for many years no one at Maynooth had shown such aptitude for scholarship. He only had to look at a book to know more about it than his fellow-students would know if they were to spend days over it. He won honours. He could have won greater honours, but his conscience reminded him that the gifts he received from God were not bestowed upon him for the mere purpose of humiliating his fellow-students. He often felt then that if certain talents had been given to him, they were given to him to use for the greater glory of God rather than for his own glorification; and his feeling was that there was nothing more hateful in God's sight than intellectual, unless perhaps spiritual, pride, and his object during his last years at Maynooth was to exhibit himself to the least advantage.

It is strange how an idea enters the soul and remakes it, and when he left Maynooth he used his influence with his cousin, the Bishop, to get himself appointed to the poorest parish in Connaught. Eliza had to dissemble, but he knew that in her heart she was furious with him. We are all extraordinarily different one from another, and if we seem most different from those whom we are most like, it is because we know nothing at all about strangers. He had gone to Kilronan in spite of Eliza, in spite of everyone, their cousin the Bishop included. He had been very happy in Bridget Clery's cottage, so happy that he didn't know himself why he ever consented to leave Kilronan.

No, it was not because he was too happy there. He had to a certain extent outgrown his very delicate conscience.

CHAP. II.

A BREEZE rose, the forest murmured, a bird sang, and the sails of the yacht filled. The priest stood watching her pass behind a rocky headland, knowing now that her destination was Kilronan Abbey. But was there water enough in the strait at this season of the year? Hardly enough to float a boat of her size. If she stuck, the picnic-party would get into the small boat, and, thus lightened, the yacht might be floated into the other arm of the lake. "A pleasant day indeed for a sail," and in imagination he followed the yacht down the lake, past its different castles, Castle Carra and Castle Burke and Church Island, the island on which Marban—Marban, the famous hermit poet, had lived.

It seemed to him strange that he had never thought of visiting the ruined church when he lived close by at the northern end of the lake. His time used to be entirely taken up with attending to the wants of his poor people, and the first year he spent in Garranard he had thought only of the possibility of inducing the Government to build a bridge across the strait. That bridge was badly wanted. All the western side of the lake was cut off from railway communication. Tinnick was the terminus, but to get to Tinnick one had to go round the lake, either by the northern or the southern end, and it was always a question which was the longer road—round by Kilronan Abbey or by the Bridge of Keel. Many people said the southern road was shorter, but the difference wasn't more than a mile, if that, and Father Oliver preferred the northern road; for it took him by his curate's house, and he could always stop there and give his horse a feed and a rest; and he liked to revisit the abbey in which he had said Mass for so long, and in which Mass had always been said for a thousand years, even since Cromwell had

unroofed it, the celebrant sheltered by an arch, the congregation kneeling under the open sky, whether it rained or snowed.

The roofing of the abbey and the bridging of the strait were the two things that the parish was really interested in. He tried when he was in Kilronan to obtain the Archbishop's consent and collaboration; Moran was trying now: he did not know that he was succeeding any better; and Father Oliver reflected a while on the peculiar temperament of their diocesan, and jumping down from the rock on which he had been sitting, he wandered along the sunny shore, thinking of the many letters he had addressed to the Board of Works on the subject of the bridge. The Board believed, or pretended to believe, that the parish could not afford the bridge; as well might it be urged that a cripple could not afford crutches. Without doubt a public meeting should be held; and in some little indignation Father Oliver began to think that public opinion should be roused and organized. It was for him to do this: he was the people's natural leader; but for many months he had done nothing in the matter. Why, he didn't know himself. Perhaps he needed a holiday; perhaps he no longer believed the Government susceptible to public opinion; perhaps he had lost faith in the people themselves! The people were the same always; the people never change, only individuals change.

And at the end of the sandy spit, where some pines had grown and seeded, he stood looking across the silvery lake wondering if his parishioners had begun to notice the change that had come over him since Nora Glynn left the parish, and as her name came into his mind he was startled out of his reverie by the sound of voices, and turning from the lake, he saw two wood-gatherers coming down a little path through the juniper-bushes. He often hid himself in the woods when he saw somebody coming, but he couldn't do so now without betraying his intention,

and he stayed where he was. The women passed on, bent under their loads. Whether they saw him or not he couldn't tell; they passed near enough for him to recognize them, and he remembered that they were in church the day he alluded to Nora in his sermon. A hundred yards further on the women unburdened and sat down to rest a while, and Father Oliver began to consider what their conversation might be. His habit of wandering away by himself had no doubt been noticed, and once it was noticed it would become a topic of conversation. "And what they do be saying now is, 'That he has never been the same man since he preached against the schoolmistress, for what should he be doing by the lake if he wasn't afraid that she made away with herself?' And perhaps they are right," he said, and walked up the shore, hoping that as soon as he was out of sight the women would forget to tell when they returned home that they had seen him walking by the lake.

All the morning he had been trying to keep Nora Glynn out of his mind, but now, as he rambled, he could not put back the memory of the day he met her for the first time, nearly two years ago, for to-day was the fifteenth of May; it was about that time a little later in the year; it must have been in June, for the day was very hot, and he had been riding fast, not wishing to keep Catherine's dinner waiting, and as he pushed his bicycle through the gate, he saw the great cheery man, Father Peter, with a face like an apple, walking up and down under the sycamores reading his breviary. It must have been in June, for the mowers were in the field opposite, in the field known as the priest's field, though Father Peter had never rented it. There had never been such weather in Ireland before, and the day he rode his bicycle over to see Father Peter seemed to him the hottest day of all. But he had heard of the new schoolmistress's musical talents, and despite the heat of the day had ridden over, so anxious was he to

hear if Father Peter were satisfied with her in all other respects. "We shall be able to talk better in the shade of the sycamores," Father Peter said, and on this they crossed the lawn, but not many steps were taken back and forth before Father Peter began to throw out hints that he didn't think Miss Glynn was altogether suited to the parish.

"But if you're satisfied with her discipline," Father Oliver jerked out, and it was all he could do to check himself from further snaps at the parish priest, a great burly man who could not tell a minor from a major chord, yet was venting the opinion that good singing distracted the attention of the congregation at their prayers. He would have liked to ask him if he was to understand that bad singing tended to a devotional mood, but wishing to remain on good terms with his superior, he said nothing and waited for Father Peter to state his case against the new schoolmistress, which he seemed to think could be done by speaking of the danger of young unmarried women in the parish. It was when they came to the break in the trees that Father Peter nudged him and said under his breath:

"Here is the young woman herself coming across the fields."

He looked that way and saw a small, thin girl coming towards the stile. She hopped over it as if she enjoyed the little jump into the road. Father Peter called to her and engaged her in conversation; and he continued to talk to her of indifferent things, no doubt with the view to giving him an opportunity of observing her. But they saw her with different eyes: whereas Father Peter descried in her one that might become a mischief in the parish, he could discover no dangerous beauty in her, merely a crumpled little face that nobody would notice were it not for the eyes and forehead. The forehead was broad and well shapen and promised an intelligence that

the eyes were quick to confirm; round, grey, intelligent eyes, smiling, welcoming eyes. Her accent caressed the ear, it was a very sweet one, only faintly Irish, and she talked easily and correctly, like one who enjoyed talking, laughing gaily, taking, he was afraid, undue pleasure in Father Peter's rough sallies, without heeding that he was trying to entrap her into some slight indiscretion of speech that he could make use of afterwards, for he must needs justify himself to himself if he decided to dismiss her.

As he had been asked to notice her he remarked her shining brown hair. It frizzled like a furze-bush about her tiny face, and curled over her forehead. Her white even teeth showed prettily between her lips. She was not without points, but notwithstanding these it could not be said that she deserved the adjective pretty; and he was already convinced that it was not good looks that prejudiced her in Father Peter's eyes. Nor was the excuse that her singing attracted too much attention an honest one. What Father Peter did not like about the girl was her independent mind, which displayed itself in every gesture, in the way she hopped over the stile, and the manner with which she toyed with her parasol—a parasol that seemed a little out of keeping with her position, it is true. A very fine parasol it was; a blue silk parasol. Her independence betrayed itself in her voice: she talked to the parish priest with due respect, but her independent mind informed every sentence, even the smallest, and that was why she was going to be dismissed from her post. It was shameful that a grave injustice should be done to a girl who was admittedly competent in the fulfilment of all her duties, and he had not tried to conceal his opinion from Father Peter during dinner and after dinner, leaving him somewhat earlier than usual, for nothing affronted him more than injustice, especially ecclesiastical injustice.

As he rode his bicycle down the lonely road to Bridget's

cottage, the thought passed through his mind that if Nora Glynn were a stupid, intelligent woman no objection would have been raised against her. "An independent mind is very objectionable to the ecclesiastic," he said to himself as he leaped off his bicycle. . . . "Nora Glynn. How well suited the name is to her. There is a smack in the name. Glynn, Nora Glynn," he repeated, and it seemed to him that the name belonged exclusively to her.

A few days after this first meeting he met her about two miles from Garranard; he was on his bicycle, she was on hers, and they both leaped instinctively from their machines. What impressed him this time far more than her looks was her happy, original mind. While walking beside her he caught himself thinking that he had never seen a really happy face before. But she was going to be sent away because she was happy and wore her soul in her face.

They had seemed unable to get away from each other, so much had they to say. He mentioned his brother James, who was doing well in America and would perhaps one day send them the price of a harmonium. She told him she couldn't play on the wheezy old thing at Garranard, and at the moment he clean forgot that the new harmonium would avail her little, since Father Peter was going to get rid of her; he only remembered it as he got on his bicycle, and he returned home ready to espouse her cause against anybody.

She must write to the Archbishop, and if he wouldn't do anything she must write to the papers. Influence must be brought to bear, and Father Peter must be prevented from perpetrating a gross injustice. He felt that it would be impossible for him to remain Father Peter's curate if the schoolmistress were sent away for no fault of hers, merely because she wore a happy face. What Father Peter would have done if he had lived no one would ever know. He might have dismissed her; even so the injus-

tice would have been slight compared with what had happened to her; and the memory of the wrong that had been done to her put such a pain into his heart that he seemed to lose sight of everything, till a fish leaping in the languid lake awoke him, and he walked on, absorbed in the memory of his mistake, his thoughts swinging back to the day he had met her on the roadside, and to the events that succeeded their meeting. Father Peter was taken ill, two days after he was dead, before the end of the week he was in his coffin; and it was left to him to turn Nora Glynn out of the parish. No doubt other men had committed faults as grave as his; but they had the strength to leave the matter in the hands of God, to say: "I can do nothing, I must put myself in the hands of God; let him judge. He is all wise." He hadn't their force of character. He believed as firmly as they did, but, for some reason which he couldn't explain to himself, he was unable to leave the matter in God's hands, and was always thinking how he could get news of her.

If it hadn't been for that woman, for that detestable Mrs. O'Mara, who was the cause of so much evil-speaking in the parish! . . . And with his heart full of hatred so black that it surprised him, he asked himself if he could forgive that woman. God might, he couldn't. And he fell to thinking how Mrs. O'Mara had long been a curse upon the parish. Father Peter was more than once compelled to speak about her from the altar, and to make plain that the stories she set going were untrue. Father Peter had warned him, but warnings are no good; he had listened to her convinced at the time that it was wrong and foolish to listen to scandalmongers, but unable to resist that beguiling tongue, for Mrs. O'Mara had a beguiling tongue—fool that he was, that he had been. There was no use going over the wretched story again; he was weary of going over it, and he tried to put it out of his

mind. But it wouldn't be put out of his mind, and in spite of himself he began to recall the events of the fatal day. He had been out all the morning, walking about with an engineer who was sent down by the Board of Works to consider the possibility of building the bridge, and had just come in to rest. Catherine had brought him a cup of tea; he was sitting by the window, almost too tired to drink it. The door was flung open. If Catherine had only asked him if he were at home to visitors, he would have said he wasn't at home to Mrs. O'Mara, but he wasn't asked; the door was flung open, and he found himself face to face with the parish magpie. And before he could bless himself she began to talk to him about the bridge, saying that she knew all about the engineer, how he had gotten his appointment, and what his qualifications were. It is easy to say one shouldn't listen to such gossips, but it is hard to shut one's ears or to let what one hears with one ear out the other ear, for she might be bringing him information that might be of use to him. So he listened, and when the bridge, and the advantage of it, had been discussed, she told him she had been staying at the convent. She had tales to tell about all the nuns and about all the pupils. She told him that half the Catholic families in Ireland had promised to send their daughters to Tinnick if Eliza succeeded in finding somebody who could teach music and singing. But Eliza didn't think there was anyone in the country qualified for the post but Nora Glynn. If Mrs. O'Mara could be believed, Eliza said that she could offer Nora Glynn more money than she was earning in Garranard. Until then he had only half listened to Mrs. O'Mara's chatter, for he disliked the woman—her chatter amused him only as the chatter of a bird might; but when he heard that his sister was trying to get his schoolmistress away from him he had flared up. "Oh, but I don't think that your schoolmistress would suit a convent school. I shouldn't like my

daughter——" "What do you mean?" Her face changed expression, and in her nasty mincing manner she began to throw out hints that Nora Glynn would not suit the nuns. He could see that she was concealing something—there was something at the back of her mind. Women of her sort want to be persuaded; their bits of scandal must be dragged from them by force; they are the unwilling victims who would say nothing if they could help it. She had said enough to oblige him to ask her to speak out, and she began to throw out hints about a man whom Nora used to meet on the hillside (she wouldn't give the man's name, she was too clever for that). She would only say that Nora had been seen on the hillside walking in lonely places with a man. Truly a detestable woman! His thoughts strayed from her for a moment, for it gave him pleasure to recollect that he had defended his schoolmistress. Didn't he say: "Now, then, Mrs. O'Mara, if you have anything definite to say, say it, but I won't listen to vague charges." "Charges—who is making charges?" she asked, and he had unfortunately called her a liar. In the middle of the row she dropped a phrase: "Anyhow, her appearance is against her." And it was true that Nora Glynn's appearance had changed in the last few months. Seeing that her words had a certain effect, Mrs. O'Mara quieted down; and while he stood wondering if it could possibly be true that Nora had deceived them, that she had been living in sin all these months, he suddenly heard Mrs. O'Mara saying that he was lacking in experience—which was quite true, but her way of saying it had roused the devil in him. Who was she that she should come telling him that he lacked experience? To be sure, he wasn't an old midwife, and that's what Mrs. O'Mara looked like, sitting before him.

He had lost control of himself, saying, "Now, will you get out of this house, you old scandalmonger, or I'll take you by the shoulders and put you out!" And he had

thrown the front-door open. What a look she gave him as she passed out! At that moment the clock struck three and he remembered suddenly that the children were coming out of school at that moment. It would have been better if he had waited. But he couldn't wait: he'd have gone mad if he had waited; and he recalled how he had jumped into the road, squeezed through the stile, and run across the field. "Why all this hurry?" he had asked himself.

She was locking up the desks; the children went by him, curtseying, and he had to wait till the last one was past the door. Nora must have guessed his errand, for her face noticeably hardened. "I've seen Mrs. O'Mara," he blurted out, "and she tells me that you've been seen walking with some man on the hillside in lonely places. . . . Don't deny it if it is true." "I'm not going to deny anything that is true." How brave she was! Her courage attracted him and softened his heart. But everything was true, alas! Everything. She told him that her plans were to steal out of the parish without saying a word to anyone, for she was determined not to disgrace him or the parish. She was thinking of him in all her trouble, and everything might have ended well if he had not asked her who the man was. She would not say, nor give any reasons why she wouldn't do so. Only this, that if the man had deserted her she didn't want anybody to bring him back, if he could be brought back; if the man were dead it were better to say nothing about him. "But if it were his fault?" "I don't see that that would make any difference."

They went out of the schoolhouse talking in quite a friendly way. There was a little drizzle in the air, and, opening her umbrella, she said, "I'm afraid you'll get wet." "Get wet, get wet! what matter?" he had answered impatiently, for the remark annoyed him. By the hawthorn-bush he began to tell her again that it would

relieve his mind to know who the man was. She tried to get away from him, but he wouldn't let her go; and catching her by the arm he besought her, saying that it would relieve his mind. How many times had he said that? But he wasn't able to persuade her, notwithstanding his insistence that as a priest of the parish he had a right to know. No doubt she had some very deep reason for keeping her secret, or perhaps his authoritative manner was the cause of her silence. However this might be, any words would have been better than "it would relieve my mind to know who the man was." "Stupid, stupid, stupid!" he muttered to himself, and he wandered from the cart-track into the wood.

It was impossible to say now why he had wished to press her secret from her. It would be unpleasant for him, as priest of the parish, to know that the man was living in the parish; but it would be still more unpleasant if he knew who the man was. Nora's seducer could be none other than one of the young soldiers who had taken the fishing-lodge at the head of the lake. Mrs. O'Mara had hinted that Nora had been seen with one of them on the hill, and he thought how on a day like this she might have been led away among the ferns. At that moment there came out of the thicket a floating ball of thistledown. "It bloweth where it listeth," he said. "Soldier or shepherd, what matter now she is gone?" and rising to his feet and coming down the sloping lawn, overflowing with the shade of the larches, he climbed through the hawthorns growing out of a crumbled wall, and once at the edge of the lake, he stood waiting for nothing seemingly but to hear the tiresome clanking call of the stonechat, and he compared its reiterated call with the words "atonement," "forgiveness," "death," "calamity," words always clanking in his heart, for she might be lying at the bottom of the lake, and some day a white phantom would rise from the water and claim him.

His thoughts broke away, and he re-lived in memory the very agony of mind he had endured when he went home after her admission that she was with child. All that night, all next day, and for how many days? Would the time ever come when he could think of her without a pain in his heart? It is said that time brings forgetfulness. Does it? On Saturday morning he had sat at his window, asking himself if he should go down to see her or if he should send for her. There were confessions in the afternoon, and expecting that she would come to confess to him, he had not sent for her. One never knows; perhaps it was her absence from confession that had angered him. His temper took a different turn that evening. All night he had lain awake; he must have been a little mad that night, for he could only think of the loss of a soul to God, and of God's love of chastity. All night long he had repeated with variations that it were better that all which our eyes see—this earth and the stars that are in being—should perish utterly, be crushed into dust, rather than a mortal sin should be committed; in an extraordinary lucidity of mind he continued to ponder on God's anger and his own responsibility towards God, and feeling all the while that there are times when we lose control of our minds, when we are a little mad. He foresaw his danger, but he could not do else than rise from his bed and begin to prepare his sermon, for he had to preach, and he could only preach on chastity and the displeasure sins against chastity cause to God. He could think but of this one thing, the displeasure God must feel against Nora and the seducer who had robbed her of the virtue God prized most in her. He must have said things that he would not have said at any other time. His brain was on fire that morning, and words rose to his lips—he knew not whence nor how they came, and he had no idea now of what he had said. He only knew that she left the church during his sermon; at what moment he did not

know, nor did he know that she had left the parish till next day, when the children came up to tell him there was no schoolmistress. And from that day to this no news of her, nor any way of getting news of her.

His thoughts went to the hawthorn-trees, for he could not think of her any more for the moment, and it relieved his mind to examine the green pips that were beginning to appear among the leaves. "The hawthorns will be in flower in another week," he said; and he began to wonder at the beautiful order of the spring. The pear and the cherry were the first; these were followed by the apple, and after the apple came the lilac, the chestnut, and the laburnum. The forest trees, too, had their order. The ash was still leafless, but it was shedding its catkins, and in another fifteen days its light foliage would be dancing in the breeze. The oak was last of all. At that moment a swallow flitted from stone to stone, too tired to fly far, and he wondered whence it had come. A cuckoo called from a distant hill; it, too, had been away and had come back.

His eyes dwelt on the lake, refined and wistful, with reflections of islands and reeds, mysteriously still. Rose-coloured clouds descended, revealing many new and beautiful mountain forms, every pass and every crest distinguishable. It was the hour when the cormorants come home to roost, and he saw three black specks flying low about the glittering surface; rising from the water, they alighted with a flutter of wings on the corner wall of what remained of Castle Hag, "and they will sleep there till morning," he said, as he toiled up a little path, twisting through ferns and thorn-bushes. At the top of the hill was his house, the house Father Peter had built. Its appearance displeased him, and he stood for a long time watching the evening darkening, and the yacht being towed home, her sails lowered, the sailors in the rowing-boat.

"They will be well tired before they get her back to Tinnick;" and he turned and entered his house abruptly.

CHAP. III.

CATHERINE'S curiosity was a worry. As if he knew why he hadn't come home to his dinner! If she'd just finish putting the plates on the table and leave him. Of course, there had been callers. One man, the man he especially wished to see, had driven ten miles to see him. It was most unfortunate, but it couldn't be helped; he had felt that morning that he couldn't stay indoors—the business of the parish had somehow got upon his nerves, but not because he had been working hard. He had done but little work since she left the parish. Now was that story going to begin again? If it did, he should go out of his mind; and he looked round the room, thinking how a lonely evening breeds thoughts of discontent.

Most of the furniture in the room was Father Peter's. Father Peter had left his curate his furniture, but the pretty mahogany bookcase and the engravings upon the walls were Father Oliver's own taste; he had bought them at an auction, and there were times when these purchases pleased him. But now he was thinking that Father Peter must have known to whom the parish would go at his death, for he could not have meant all his furniture to be taken out of the house—"there would be no room for it in Bridget Clery's cottage;" and Father Oliver sat thinking of the evenings he used to spend with Father Peter. How often during those evenings Father Peter must have said to himself, "One day, Gogarty, you will be sitting in my chair and sleeping in my bed." And Father Oliver pondered on his affection for the dead man. There were no differences of opinion, only one—the neglected garden at the back of the house; and, smiling

sadly, Father Oliver remembered how he used to reprove the parish priest.

"I'm afraid I'm too big and too fat and too fond of my pipe and my glass of whisky to care much about carnations. But if you get the parish when I'm gone, I'm sure you'll grow some beauties, and you'll put a bunch on my grave sometimes, Gogarty." The very ring of the dead man's voice seemed to sound through the lonely room, and, sitting in Father Peter's chair, with the light of Father Peter's lamp shining on his face and hand, Father Oliver's thoughts flowed on. It seemed to him that he had not understood and appreciated Father Peter's kindliness, and he recalled his perfect good nature. "Death reveals many things to us," he said; and he lifted his head to listen, for the silence in the house and about the house reminded him of the silence of the dead, and he began to consider what his own span of life might be. He might live as long as Father Peter (Father Peter was fifty-five when he died); if so, twenty-one years of existence by the lake's side awaited him, and these years seemed to him empty like a desert—yes, and as sterile. "Twenty-one years wondering what became of her, and every evening like this evening—the same loneliness."

He sat watching the hands of his clock, and a peaceful meditation about a certain carnation that unfortunately burst its calyx was interrupted by a sudden thought. Whence the thought came he could not tell, nor what had put it into his head, but it had occurred to him suddenly that "if Father Peter had lived a few weeks longer he would have found means of exchanging Nora Glynn for another schoolmistress, more suitable to the requirements of the parish. If Father Peter had lived he would have done her a grievous wrong. He wouldn't have allowed her to suffer, but he would have done her a wrong all the same." And it were better that a man should meet

his death than he should do a wrong to another. But he wasn't contemplating his own death nor Nora's when this end to the difficulty occurred to him. Our inherent hypocrisy is so great that it is difficult to know what one does think. He surely did not think it well that Father Peter had died, his friend, his benefactor, the man in whose house he was living? Of course not. Then it was strange he could not keep the thought out of his mind that Father Peter's death had saved the parish from a great scandal, for if Nora had been dismissed he might have found himself obliged to leave the parish.

Again he turned on himself and asked how such thoughts could come into his mind. True, the coming of a thought into the consciousness is often unexpected, but if the thought were not latent in the mind, it would not arise out of the mind; and if Father Peter knew the base thoughts he indulged in—yes, indulged in, for he could not put them quite out of his mind—he feared very much that the gift of all this furniture might—— No, he was judging Father Peter ill: Father Peter was incapable of a mean regret.

But who was he, he'd like to be told, that he should set himself up as Father Peter's judge? The evil he had foreseen had happened. If Father Peter felt that Nora Glynn was not the kind of schoolmistress the parish required, should he not send her away? The need of the parish, of the many, before the one. Moreover, Father Peter was under no obligation whatsoever to Nora Glynn. She had been sent down by the School Board subject to his approval. "But my case is quite different. I chose her; I decided that she was to remain." And he asked himself if his decision had come about gradually. No, he had never hesitated, but dismissed Father Peter's prejudices as unworthy. . . . The church needed some good music. But did he think of the church? Hardly at all. His first consideration was his personal pleasure,

and he wished that the best choir in the diocese should be in his church, and Nora Glynn enabled him to gratify his vanity. He made her his friend, taking pleasure in her smiles, and in the fact that he had only to express a desire for it to be fulfilled. After school, tired though she might be, she was always willing to meet him in the church for choir practice. She would herself propose to decorate the altar for feast-days. How many times had they walked round the garden together gathering flowers for the altar! And it was strange that she could decorate so well without knowing much about flowers or having much natural taste for flowers.

Feeling he was doing her an injustice, he admitted that she had made much progress under his guidance in her knowledge of flowers.

"But how did he treat her in the end, despite all her kindnesses? Shamefully, shamefully, shamefully!" and getting up from his chair Father Oliver walked across the room, and when he turned he drew his hand across his eyes. The clock struck twelve. "I shall be awake at dawn," he said, "with all this story running in my head," and he stopped on the threshold of his bedroom, frightened at the sight of his bed. But he had reached the stint of his sufferings, and that morning lay awake, hardly annoyed at all by the blackbirds' whistling, contentedly going over the mistakes he had made—a little surprised, however, that the remembrance of them did not cause him more pain. At last he fell asleep, and when his housekeeper knocked at his door and he heard her saying that it was past eight, he leaped out of bed cheerily, and sang a stave of song as he shaved himself, gashing his chin, however, for he could not keep his attention fixed on his chin, but must peep over the top of the glass, whence he could see his garden, and think how next year he would contrive a better arrangement of colour. It was difficult to stop the bleeding, and he knew that Catherine would

grumble at the state he left the towels in (he should not have used his bath-towel); but these were minor matters. He was happier than he had been for many a day.

The sight of strawberries on his breakfast-table pleased him; the man who drove ten miles to see him yesterday called, and he shared his strawberries with him in abundant spirit. The sunlight was exciting, the lake called him, and it was pleasant to stride along, talking of the bridge (at last there seemed some prospect of getting one). The intelligence of this new inspector filled him with hope, and he expatiated in the advantages of the bridge and many other things. Nor did his humour seem to depend entirely on the companionship of his visitor. It endured long after his visitor had left him, and very soon he began to think that his desire to go away for a long holiday was a passing indisposition of mind rather than a need. His holiday could be postponed to the end of the year; there would be more leisure then, and he would be better able to enjoy his holiday than he would be now.

His changing mind interested him, and he watched it like a vane, unable to understand how it was that, notwithstanding his restlessness, he could not bring himself to go away. Something seemed to keep him back, and he was not certain that the reason he stayed was because the Government had not yet sent a formal promise to build the bridge. He could think of no other reason for delaying in Garranard; he certainly wanted change. And then Nora's name came into his mind, and he meditated for a moment, seeing the colour of her hair and the vanishing expression of her eyes. Sometimes he could see her hand, the very texture of its skin, and the line of the thumb and the forefinger. A cat had once scratched her hand, and she had told him about it. That was about two months before Mrs. O'Mara had come to tell him that shocking story, two months before he had gone down to

his church and spoken about Nora in such a way that she had gone out of the parish. But was he going to begin the story over again? He picked up a book, but did not read many sentences before he was once more asking himself if she had gone down to the lake, and if it were her spell that kept him in Garranard. "The wretchedness of it all," he cried, and fell to thinking that Nora's spirit haunted the lake, and that his punishment was to be kept a prisoner always. His imagination ran riot. Perhaps he would have to seek her out, follow her all over the world, a sort of Wandering Jew, trying to make atonement, and would never get any rest until this atonement was made. And the wrong that he had done her seemed the only reality. It was his elbow companion in the evening as he sat smoking his pipe, and every morning he stood at the end of a sandy spit seeing nothing, hearing nothing but her. One day he was startled by a footstep, and turned expecting to see Nora. But it was only Christy, the boy who worked in his garden.

"Your reverence, the postman overlooked this letter in the morning. It was stuck at the bottom of the bag. He hopes the delay won't make any difference."

From Father O'Grady to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"*June* 1, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"I am writing to ask you if you know anything about a young woman called Nora Glynn. She tells me that she was schoolmistress in your parish and organist in your church, and that you thought very highly of her until one day a tale-bearer, Mrs. O'Mara by name, went to your house and told you that your schoolmistress was going to have a baby. It appears that at first you refused to believe her, and that you ran down to the school to ask Miss Glynn herself if the story you had heard about her

was a true one. She admitted it, but on her refusal to tell you who was the father of the child you lost your temper; and the following Sunday you alluded to her so plainly in your sermon about chastity that there was nothing for her but to leave the parish.

"There is no reason why I should disbelieve Miss Glynn's story; I am an Irish priest like yourself, sir. I have worked in London among the poor for forty years, and Miss Glynn's story is, to my certain knowledge, not an uncommon one; it is, I am sorry to say, most probable; it is what would happen to any schoolmistress in Ireland in similar circumstances. The ordinary course is to find the man and to force him to marry the girl; if this fails, to drive the woman out of the parish, it being better to sacrifice one affected sheep than that the whole flock should be contaminated. I am an old man; Miss Glynn tells me that you are a young man. I can therefore speak quite frankly. I believe the practice to which I have alluded is inhuman and unchristian, and has brought about the ruin of many an Irish girl. I have been able to rescue some from the streets, and, touched by their stories, I have written frequently to the priest of the parish pointing out to him that his responsibility is not merely local, and does not end as soon as the woman has passed the boundary of his parish. I would ask you what you think your feelings would be if I were writing to you now to tell you that, after some months of degraded life, Miss Glynn had thrown herself from one of the bridges into the river? That might very well have been the story I had to write to you; fortunately for you, it is another story.

"Miss Glynn is a woman of strong character, and does not give way easily; her strength of will has enabled her to succeed where another woman might have failed. She is now living with one of my parishioners, a Mrs. Dent, of 24, Harold Street, who has taken a great liking to her,

and helped her through her most trying time, when she had very little money and was alone and friendless in London. Mrs. Dent recommended her to some people in the country who would look after her child. She allowed her to pay her rent by giving lessons to her daughter on the piano. One thing led to another; the lady who lived on the drawing-room floor took lessons, and Miss Glynn is earning now, on an average, thirty shillings per week, which little income will be increased if I can appoint her to the post of organist in my church, my organist having been obliged to leave me on account of her health. It was while talking to Mrs. Dent on this very subject that I first heard Miss Glynn's name mentioned.

"Mrs. Dent was enthusiastic about her, but I could see that she knew little about her lodger's antecedents, except that she came from Ireland. She was anxious that I should engage her at once, declaring that I could find no one like her, and she asked me to see her that evening. I went, and the young woman impressed me very favourably. She came to my church and played for me. I could see that she was an excellent musician, and there seemed to be no reason why I should not engage her. I should probably have done so without asking any further questions—for I do not care to inquire too closely into a woman's past, once I am satisfied that she wishes to lead an honourable life—but Miss Glynn volunteered to tell me what her past had been, saying it was better I should hear it from her than from another. When she had told me her sad story, I reminded her of the anxiety that her disappearance from the parish would cause you. She shook her head, saying you did not care what might happen to her. I assured her that such a thing was not the case, and begged of her to allow me to write to you; but I did not obtain her consent until she began to see that if she withheld it any longer we might think she was con-

cealing some important fact. Moreover, I impressed upon her that it was right that I should hear your story, not because I disbelieved hers—I take it for granted the facts are correctly stated—but in the event of your being able to say something which would put a different complexion upon them.

"Yours very sincerely,

"Michael O'Grady."

CHAP. IV.

AFTER reading Father O'Grady's letter he looked round, fearing lest someone should speak to him. Christy was already some distance away; there was nobody else in sight; and feeling he was safe from interruption, he went towards the wood, thinking of the good priest who had saved her (in saving her Father O'Grady had saved him), and of the waste of despair into which he would have drifted certainly if the news had been that she had killed herself. He stood appalled, looking into the green wood, aware of the mysterious life in the branches; and then lay down to watch the insect life among the grass—a beetle pursuing its little or great destiny. But he was too exalted to remain lying down; the wood seemed to beckon him, and he asked if the madness of the woods had overtaken him. Further on he came upon a chorus of finches singing in some hawthorn-trees, and in Derrinrush he stopped to listen to the silence that had suddenly fallen. A shadow floated by; he looked up: a hawk was passing overhead, ready to attack rat or mouse moving among the young birches and firs that were springing up in the clearance. The light was violent, and the priest shaded his eyes. His feet sank in sand, he tripped over tufts of rough grass, and was glad to get out of this part of the wood into the shade of large trees.

Trees always interested him, and he began to think of their great roots seeking the darkness, and of their branches lifting themselves in love towards the light. He and these trees were one, for there is but one life, one mother, one elemental substance out of which all has come. That was it, and his thoughts paused. Only in union is there happiness, and for many weary months he had been isolated, thrown out; but to-day he had been drawn suddenly into the general life, he had become again part of the general harmony, and that was why he was so happy. No better explanation was forthcoming, and he did not think that a better one was required—at least, not to-day.

He noticed with pleasure that he no longer tried to pass behind a thicket nor into one when he met poor wood-gatherers bent under their heavy loads. He even stopped to speak to a woman out with her children; the three were breaking sticks across their knees, and he encouraged them to talk to him. But without his being aware of it, his thoughts hearkened back, and when it came to his turn to answer he could not answer. He had been thinking of Nora, and, ashamed of his absentmindedness, he left them tying up their bundles and went towards the shore, stopping many times to admire the pale arch of evening sky with never a wind in it, nor any sound but the cries of swallows in full pursuit. "A rememberable evening," he said, and there was such a lightness in his feet that he believed, or very nearly, that there were wings on his shoulders which he only had to open to float away whither he might wish to go.

His brain overflowed with thankfulness and dreams of her forgiveness, and at midnight he sat in his study still thinking, still immersed in his happiness; and hearing moths flying about the burning lamp he rescued one for sheer love of her, and later in the evening the illusion of her presence was so intense that he started up from his chair and looked round for her. Had he not felt her

breath upon his cheek? Her very perfume had floated past! There . . . it had gone by again! No, it was not she—only the syringa breathing in the window.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Father O'Grady.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*June* 2, 19—.

"Dear Father O'Grady,

"Miss Glynn's disappearance caused me, as you rightly surmise, the gravest anxiety, and it is no exaggeration to say that whenever her name was mentioned, my tongue seemed to thicken and I could not speak.

"I wish I could find words to thank you for what you have done. I am still under the influence of the emotion that your letter caused me, and can only say that Miss Glynn has told her story truthfully. As to your reproofs, I accept them, they are merited; and I thank you for your kind advice. I am glad that it comes from an Irishman, and I would give much to take you by the hand and to thank you again and again."

Getting up, he walked out of the room, feeling in a way that a calmer and more judicious letter would be preferable. But he must answer Father O'Grady, and at once; the letter would have to go. And in this resolve he walked out of his house into his garden, and stood there wondering at the flower-life growing so peacefully, free from pain.

The tall Madonna lilies flourished like sculpture about the porch, and he admired their tall stems and leaves and carven blossoms, thinking how they would die without strife, without complaint. The briar filled the air with a sweet, apple-like smell; and far away the lake shone in the moonlight, just as it had a thousand years ago when the raiders returned to their fortresses pursued by

enemies. He could just distinguish Castle Island, and he wondered what this lake reminded him of: it wound in and out of grey shores and headlands, fading into dim pearl-coloured distance, and he compared it to a shroud, and then to a ghost, but neither comparison pleased him. It was like something, but the image he sought eluded him. At last he remembered how in a dream he had seen Nora carried from the lake; and now, standing among the scent of the flowers, he said: "She has always been associated with the lake in my thoughts, yet she escaped the lake. Every man," he continued, "has a lake in his heart." He had not sought the phrase, it had come suddenly into his mind. Yes, "Every man has a lake in his heart," he repeated, and returned to the house like one dazed, to sit stupefied until his thoughts took fire again, and going to his writing-table he drew a sheet of paper towards him, feeling that he must write to Nora. At last he picked up the pen.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*June* 2, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I must write to thank you for your kindness in asking Father O'Grady to send me a letter. It appears that you were afraid I might be anxious about you, and I have been very anxious. I have suffered a great deal since you left, and it is a great relief to my mind to hear that you are safe and well. I can understand how loath you were to allow Father O'Grady to write to me; he doesn't say in his letter that you have forgiven me, but I hope that your permission to him to relieve my anxiety by a letter implies your forgiveness. Father O'Grady writes very kindly; it appears that everybody is kind except me. But I am thinking of myself again, of the ruin that

it would have been if any of the terrible things that have happened to others had happened to you. But I cannot think of these things now; I am happy in thinking that you are safe."

The evening post was lost, but if he were to walk to Bohola he would catch the morning mail, and his letter would be in her hands the day after to-morrow. It was just three miles to Bohola, and the walk there, he thought, would calm the extraordinary spiritual elation that news of Nora had kindled in his brain. The darkness of the night and the almost round moon high in the southern horizon suited his mood. Once he was startled by a faint sigh coming from a horse looking over a hedge, and the hedgerows were full of mysterious little cracklings. Something white ran across the road. "The white belly of a stoat," he thought; and he walked on, wondering what its quest might be.

The road led him through a heavy wood, and when he came out at the other end he stopped to gaze at the stars, for already a greyness seemed to have come into the night. The road dipped and turned, twisting through grey fields full of furz-bushes, leading to a great hill, on the other side of which was Bohola. When he entered the village he wondered at the stillness of its street. "The dawn is like white ashes," he said, as he dropped his letters into the box; and he was glad to get away from the shadowy houses into the country road. The daisies and the dandelions were still tightly shut, and in the hedgerow a half-awakened chaffinch hopped from twig to twig, too sleepy to chirrup. A streak of green appeared in the east, and the death-like stillness was broken by cock-crows. He could hear them far away in the country and close by, and when he entered his village a little bantam walked up the road shrilling and clapping his wings, advancing to the fight. The priest admired his

courage, and allowed him to peck at his knees. Close by Tom Mulhare's dorking was crowing hoarsely, "A hoarse bass," said the priest, and at the end of the village he heard a bird crowing an octave higher, and from the direction he guessed it must be Catherine Murphy's bird. Another cock, and then another. He listened, judging their voices to range over nearly three octaves.

The morning was so pure, the air so delicious, and its touch so exquisite on the cheek, that he could not bear even to think of a close bedroom and the heat of a feather bed. He went into his garden, and walking up and down he appreciated the beauty of every flower, none seeming to him as beautiful as the anemones, and he thought of Nora Glynn living in a grimy London lodging, whereas he was here amid many flowers—anemones blue, scarlet, and purple, their heads bent down on their stalks. New ones were pushing up to replace the ones that had blown and scattered the evening before. The gentians were not yet open, and he thought how they would look in a few hours—bluer than the midday sky. He passed through the wicket, and stood on the hilltop watching the mists sinking lower. The dawn light strengthened—the sky filled with pale tints of emerald, mauve, and rose. A cormorant opened his wings and flew down the lake, his fellows followed soon after; but Father Oliver stood on the hilltop waiting for daybreak. At last a red ball appeared behind a reddish cloud; its colour changed to the colour of flame, paled again, and at four flared up like a rose-coloured balloon.

The day had begun, and he turned towards his house. But he couldn't sleep; the house was repellent, and he waited among the thorn-bushes and ferns. Of what use to lie in one's bed when sleep is far and will not be beckoned? and his brain being clear as day he went away to the woods and watersides, saying: "Life is orientated like a temple; there are in every existence days when life

streams down the nave, striking the forehead of the God." And during his long life Father Oliver always looked back upon the morning when he invaded the pantry and cut large slices of bread, taking the butter out of the old red crock, with a little happy sadness in his heart. He wrapped the slices in paper and wandered without thought for whither he was going, watching the birds in the branches, interested in everything. He was fortunate enough to catch sight of an otter asleep on a rock, and towards evening he came upon a wild-duck's nest in the sedge; many of the ducklings had broken their shells; these struggled after the dusk; but there were two prisoners, two that could not escape from their shells, and, seeing their lives would be lost if he did not come to their aid, he picked the shells away and took them to the water's edge, for he had heard Catherine say that one could almost see little ducks growing when they had had a drop of water. The old duck swam about uttering a whistling sound, her cry that her ducklings were to join her. And thinking of the lives he had saved, he felt a sudden regret that he had not come upon the nest earlier, when Christy brought him Father O'Grady's letter.

The yacht appeared between the islands, her sails filled with wind, and he began to dream how she might cast anchor outside the reeds. A sailor might draw a pinnace alongside, and he imagined a woman being helped into it and rowed to the landing-place. But the yacht did not cast anchor; her helm was put up, her boom went over, and she went away on another tack. He was glad of his dream, though it lasted but a moment, and when he looked up a great gull was watching him. The bird had come so near that he could see the small round head and the black eyes; as soon as he stirred it wheeled and floated away. Many other little adventures happened before the day ended. A rabbit crawled by him screaming, for he could run no longer, and lay waiting for the weasel that ap-

peared out of the furze. What was to be done? Save it and let the weasel go supperless? At eight the moon rose over Tinnick, and it was a great sight to see the yellow mass rising above the faint shores; and while he stood watching the moon an idea occurred to him that held him breathless. His sister had written to him some days ago asking if he could recommend a music-mistress to her. It was through his sister that he might get Nora back to her country, and it was through his sister that he might make atonement for the wrong he had done. The letter must be carefully worded, for nuns understood so little, so estranged were they from the world. As for his sister Mary, she would not understand at all—she would oppose him; but Eliza was a practical woman, and he had confidence in her good sense.

He entered the house, and, waving Catherine aside, who reminded him that he had had nothing to eat since his dinner the day before, he went to his writing-table and began his letter.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to the Mother Abbess, Tinnick Convent.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*June* 3, 19—.

"My dear Eliza,

"I hope you will forgive me for having delayed so long to answer your letter, but I could not think at the moment of anybody whom I could recommend as music-mistress, and I laid the letter aside, hoping that an idea would come to me. Well, an idea has come to me. I do not think you will find——"

The priest stopped, and after thinking a while he laid down his pen and got up. The sentence he had been about to write was, "I do not think you will find anyone

better than Miss Glynn." But he would have to send Father O'Grady's letter to his sister, and even with Father O'Grady's letter and all that he might add of an explanation, she would hardly be able to understand; and Eliza might show the letter to Mary, who was prejudiced. Father Oliver walked up and down the room thinking. . . . A personal interview would be better than the letter, for in a personal interview he would be able to answer his sister's objections, and instead of the long letter he had intended to write he wrote a short note, adding that he had not seen them for a long time, and would drive over to-morrow afternoon.

CHAP. V.

THE southern road was the shorter, but he wanted to see Moran and to hear when he proposed to begin to roof the abbey. Father Oliver thought, moreover, that he would like to see the abbey for a last time in its green mantle of centuries. The distance was much the same—a couple of miles shorter by the southern road, no doubt, but what are a couple of miles to an old roadster? Moreover, the horse would rest in Jimmy Maguire's stable whilst he and Moran rambled about the ruin. An hour's rest would compensate the horse for the two extra miles.

He tapped the glass; there was no danger of rain. For thirty days there had been no change—only a few showers, just enough to keep the country going; and he fell asleep thinking of the drive round the lake from Garranard to Tinnick in the sunlight and from Tinnick to Garranard in the moonlight.

He was out of bed an hour before his usual time, calling to Catherine for hot water. His shaving, always disagreeable, sometimes painful, was a joyous little labour on this day. Stropping his razor, he sang from sheer joy

of living. Catherine had never seen him spring on the car with so light a step. And away went the old grey pulling at the bridle, little thinking of the twenty-five Irish miles that lay before him.

The day was the same as yesterday, the meadows drying up for want of rain; and there was a thirsty chirruping of small birds in the hedgerows. Everywhere he saw rooks gaping on the low walls that divided the fields. The farmers were complaining; but they were always complaining—everyone was complaining. He had complained of the dilatoriness of the Board of Works, and now for the first time in his life he sympathized a little with the Board. If it had built the bridge he would not be enjoying this long drive; it would be built by-and-by; he couldn't feel as if he wished to be robbed of one half-hour of the long day in front of him; and he liked to think it would not end for him till nine o'clock.

"These summer days are endless," he said.

After passing the strait the lake widened out. On the side the priest was driving the shore was empty and barren. On the other side there were pleasant woods and interspaces and castles. Castle Carra appeared, a great ivy-grown ruin showing among thorn-bushes and ash-trees, at the end of a headland. In bygone times the castle must have extended to the water's edge, for on every side fragments of arches and old walls were discovered hidden away in the thickets. Father Oliver knew the headland well and every part of the old fortress. Many a time he had climbed up the bare wall of the banqueting-hall to where a breach revealed a secret staircase built between the walls, and followed the staircase to a long straight passage, and down another staircase, in the hope of finding matchlock pistols. Many a time he had wandered in the dungeons, and listened to old stories of oubliettes.

The moat which once cut the neck of land was now

dry and overgrown; the gateway remained, but it was sinking—the earth claimed it. There were the ruins of a great house a little way inland, to which no doubt the descendants of the chieftain retired on the decline of brigandage; and the rough hunting life of its semi-chieftains was figured by the gigantic stone fox on a pillar in the middle of the courtyard and the great hounds on either side of the gateway.

Castle Carra must have been the strongest castle in the district of Tyrawley, and it was built maybe by the Welsh who invaded Ireland in the thirteenth century, perhaps by William Barrett himself, who built certainly the castle on the island opposite to Father Oliver's house.

William Fion (*i. e.*, the Fair) Barrett landed somewhere on the west coast, and no doubt came up through the great gaps between Slieve Cairn and Slieve Louan—it was not likely that he landed on the east coast; he could hardly have marched his horde across Ireland—and Father Oliver imagined the Welshmen standing on the very hill on which his house now stood, and Fion telling his followers to build a castle on each island. Patsy Murphy, who knew more about the history of the country than anybody, thought that Castle Carra was of later date, and spoke of the Stantons, a fierce tribe. Over yonder was the famous causeway, and the gross tragedy that was enacted there he yesterday heard from the woodcutter.

William's party of Welshmen were followed by other Welshmen—the Cusacks, the Petits, and the Brownes; and these in time fell out with the Barretts, and a great battle fought, the Battle of Moyne, in 1281, in which William Barrett was killed. But in spite of their defeat, the Barretts held the upper hand of the country for many a long year, and the priest began to smile, thinking of the odd story the old woodman had told him about the Bar-

retts' steward, Sgnorach bhuid bhearrtha, "saving your reverence's presence," the old man said, and, unable to translate the words into English fit for the priest's ears, he explained that they meant a glutton and a lewd fellow.

The Barretts sent Sgnorach bhuid bhearrtha to collect rents from the Lynotts, another group of Welshmen, but the Lynotts killed him and threw his body into a well, called ever afterwards Tobar na Sgornaighe (the Well of the Glutton), near the townland of Moygawnagh, Barony of Tyrawley. To avenge the murder of their steward, the Barretts assembled an armed force, and, having defeated the Lynotts and captured many of them, they offered their prisoners two forms of mutilation: they were either to be blinded or castrated. After taking counsel with their wise men, the Lynotts chose blindness; for blind men could have sons, and these would doubtless one day revenge the humiliation that was being passed upon them. A horrible story it was, for when their eyes were thrust out with needles they were led to a causeway, and those who crossed the stepping-stones without stumbling were taken back; and the priest thought of the assembled horde laughing as the poor blind men fell into the water.

The story rambled on, the Lynotts plotting how they could be revenged on the Barretts, telling lamely but telling how the Lynotts, in the course of generations, came into their revenge. "A badly told story," said the priest, "with one good incident in it," and, instead of trying to remember how victory came to the Lynotts, Father Oliver's eyes strayed over the landscape, taking pleasure in the play of light along sides and crests of the hills.

The road followed the shore of the lake, sometimes turning inland to avoid a hill or a bit of bog, but returning back again to the shore, finding its way through the fields, if they could be called fields—a little grass and

some hazel-bushes growing here and there between the rocks. Under a rocky headland, lying within embaying shores, was Church Island, some seven or eight acres, a handsome wooded island, the largest in the lake, with the ruins of a church hidden among the tall trees, only an arch of it remaining, but the paved path leading from the church to the hermit's cell could be followed. The hermit who used this paved path fourteen hundred years ago was a poet; and Father Oliver knew that Marban loved "the sheiling that no one knew save his God, the ash-tree on the hither side, the hazel-bush beyond it, its lintel of honeysuckle, the wood shedding its mast upon fat swine;" and on this sweet day he found it pleasanter to think of Ireland's hermits than of Ireland's savage chieftains always at war, striving against each other along the shores of this lake, and from island to island.

His thoughts lingered in the seventh and eighth centuries, when the arts were fostered in monasteries—the arts of gold-work and illuminated missals—"Ireland's halcyon days," he said; "a deep peace brooded, and under the guidance of the monks Ireland was the centre of learning when England was in barbarism. The first renaissance was the Irish, centuries before a gleam showed in Italy or in France. But in the middle of the eighth century the Danes arrived to pillage the country, and no sooner were they driven out than the English came to continue the work of destruction, and never since has it ceased." Father Oliver fell to thinking if God were reserving the bright destiny for Ireland which he withheld a thousand years ago, and looked out for the abbey that Roderick, King of Connaught, built in the twelfth century.

It stood on a knoll, and in the distance, almost hidden in bulrushes, was the last arm of the lake. "How admirable! how admirable!" he said. Kilronan Abbey seemed to bid him remember the things that he could

never forget; and, touched by the beauty of the legended ruins, his doubts returned to him regarding the right of the present to lay hands on these great wrecks of Ireland's past. He was no longer sure that he did not side with the Archbishop, who was against the restoration—for entirely insufficient reasons, it was true. "Put a roof," Father Oliver said, "on the abbey, and it will look like any other church, and another link will be broken. 'Which is the better—a great memory or some trifling comfort?'" A few moments after the car turned the corner and he caught sight of Father Moran, "out for his morning's walk," he said; and he compared Moran's walk up and down the highroad with his own rambles along the lake shores and through the pleasant woods of Carnecun.

For seven years Father Oliver had walked up and down that road, for there was nowhere else for him to walk; he walked that road till he hated it, but he did not think that he had suffered from the loneliness of the parish as much as Moran. He had been happier than Moran in Bridget Clery's cottage—a great idea enabled him to forget every discomfort; and "we are never lonely as long as our idea is with us," he ejaculated. "But Moran is a plain man, without ideas, enthusiasms, or exaltations. He does not care for reading, or for a flower garden, only for drink. Drink gives him dreams, and man must dream," he said.

He knew that his curate was pledged to cure himself, and believed he was succeeding; but, all the same, it was terrible to think that the temptation might overpower him at any moment, and that he might stagger helpless through the village—a very shocking example to everybody.

The people were prone enough in that direction, and for a priest to give scandal instead of setting a good example was about as bad as anything that could happen

in the parish. But what was he to do? There was no hard-and-fast rule about anything, and Father Oliver felt that Moran must have his chance.

"I was beginning to think we were never going to see you again;" and Father Moran held out a long, hard hand to Father Oliver. "You'll put up your horse? Christy, will you take his reverence's horse? You'll stay and have some dinner with me?"

"I can't stay more than half an hour. I'm on my way to Tinnick; I've business with my sister, and it will take me some time."

"You have plenty of time."

"No, I haven't. I ought to have taken the other road; I'm late as it is."

"But you will come into the house, if only for a few minutes."

Father Oliver had taught Bridget Clery cleanliness; at least, he had persuaded her to keep the fowls out of the kitchen, and he had put a paling in front of the house and made a little garden—an unassuming one, it is true, but a pleasant spot of colour in the summer-time—and he wondered how it was that Father Moran was not ashamed of its neglected state, nor of the widow's kitchen. These things were, after all, immaterial. What was important was that he should find no faintest trace of whisky in Moran's room. It was a great relief to him not to notice any, and no doubt that was why Moran insisted on bringing him into the house. The specifications were a pretext. He had to glance at them, however.

"No doubt if the abbey is to be roofed at all the best roof is the one you propose."

"Then you side with the Archbishop?"

"Perhaps I do in a way, but for different reasons. I know very well that the people won't kneel in the rain. Is it really true that he opposes the roofing of the abbey on account of the legend? I have heard the legend, but

there are many variants. Let's go to the abbey and you'll tell the story on the way."

"You see, he'll only allow a portion of the abbey to be roofed."

"You don't mean that he is so senile and superstitious as that? Then the reason of his opposition really is that he believes his death to be implicit in the roofing of Kilronan."

"Yes; he thinks that;" and the priests turned out of the main road.

"How beautiful it looks!" and Father Oliver stopped to admire.

The abbey stood on one of the lower slopes, on a knoll overlooking rich water-meadows, formerly abbatial lands.

"The legend says that the abbey shall be roofed when a De Stanton is Abbot, and the McEvillys were originally De Stantons; they changed their name in the fifteenth century on account of a violation of sanctuary committed by them. A roof shall be put on those walls, the legend says, when a De Stanton is again Abbot of Kilronan, and the Abbot shall be slain on the highroad."

"And to save himself from a violent death, he will only allow you to roof a part of the abbey. Now, what reason does he give for such an extraordinary decision?"

"Are Bishops ever expected to have reasons?"

The priests laughed, and Father Oliver said: "We might appeal to Rome."

"A lot of good that would do us. Haven't we all heard the Archbishop say that any of his priests who appeals to Rome against him will get the worst of it?"

"I wonder that he dares to defy popular opinion in this way."

"What popular opinion is there to defy? Wasn't Patsy Donovan saying to me only yesterday that the Archbishop was a brave man to be letting any roof at

all on the abbey? And Patsy is the best-educated man in this part of the country."

"People will believe anything."

"Yes, indeed."

And the priests stopped at the grave of Seaghan na Soggarth, or "John of the Priests," and Father Oliver told Father Moran how a young priest, who had lost his way in the mountains, had fallen in with Seaghan na Soggarth. Seaghan offered to put him into the right road, but instead of doing so he led him to his house, and closed the door on him, and left him there tied hand and foot. Seaghan's sister, who still clung to religion, loosed the priest, and he fled, passing Seaghan, who was on his way to fetch the soldiers. Seaghan followed after, and on they went like hare and hound till they got to the abbey. There the priest, who could run no further, turned on his foe, and they fought until the priest got hold of Seaghan's knife and killed him with it.

"But you know the story. Why am I telling it to you?"

"I only know that the priest killed Seaghan. Is there any more of it?"

"Yes, there is more."

And Father Oliver went on to tell it, though he did not feel that Father Moran would be interested in the legend; he would not believe that it had been prophesied that an ash-tree should grow out of the buried head, and that one of the branches should take root and pierce Seaghan's heart. And he was right in suspecting his curate's lack of sympathy. Father Moran at once objected that the ash-tree had not yet sent down a branch to pierce the priest-killer's heart.

"Not yet; but this branch nearly touches the ground, and there's no saying that it won't take root in a few years."

"But his heart is there no longer."

"Well, no," said Father Oliver, "it isn't; but if one is to argue that way, no one would listen to a story at all."

Father Moran held his peace for a little while, and then he began talking about the penal times, telling how religion in Ireland was another form of love of country, and that, if Catholics were intolerant to every form of heresy, it was because they instinctively felt that the questioning of any dogma would mean some slight subsidence from the idea of nationality that held the people together. Like the ancient Jews, the Irish believed that the faith of their forefathers could bring them into their ultimate inheritance; this was why a proselytizer was hated so intensely.

"More opinions," Father Oliver said to himself. "I wonder he can't admire that ash-tree, and be interested in the story, which is quaint and interesting, without trying to draw an historical parallel between the Irish and the Jews. Anyhow, thinking is better than drinking," and he jumped on his car. The last thing he heard was Moran's voice saying, "He who betrays his religion betrays his country."

"Confound the fellow, bothering me with his preaching on this fine summer's day! Much better if he did what he was told, and made up his mind to put the small green slates on the abbey, and not those coarse blue things which will make the abbey look like a common barn."

Then, shading his eyes with his hand, he peered through the sun haze, following the shapes of the fields. The corn was six inches high, and the potatoes were coming into blossom. True, there had been a scarcity of water, but they had had a good summer, thanks be to God, and he thought he had never seen the country looking so beautiful. And he loved this country, this poor Western plain with shapely mountains enclosing the horizon.

Ponies were feeding between the whins, and they raised their shaggy heads to watch the car passing. In the distance cattle were grazing, whisking the flies away. How beautiful was everything—the white clouds hanging in the blue sky, and the trees! There were some trees, but not many—only a few pines. He caught glimpses of the lake through the stems; tears rose to his eyes, and he attributed his happiness to his native land and to the thought that he was living in it. Only a few days ago he wished to leave it—no, not for ever, but for a time; and as his old car jogged through the ruts he wondered how it was that he had ever wished to leave Ireland, even for a single minute.

"Now, Christy, which do you reckon to be the shorter road?"

"The shorter road, your reverence, is the Joycetown road, but I doubt if we can get the car through it."

"How is that?"

And the boy answered that since the Big House had been burnt the road hadn't been kept in repair.

"But," said Father Oliver, "the Big House was burnt seventy years ago."

"Well, your reverence, you see, it was a good road then, but the last time I heard of a car going that way was last February."

"And if a car got through in February, why can't we get through on the first of June?"

"Well, your reverence, there was the storm, and I do be hearing that the trees that fell across the road then haven't been removed yet."

"I think we might try the road, for all that, for though we have to walk the greater part of it, there will be a saving in the end."

"That's true, your reverence, if we can get the car through; but if we can't we may have to come all the way back again."

"Well, Christy, we'll have to risk that. Now, will you be turning the horse up the road? And I'll stop at the Big House—I've never been inside it. I'd like to see what it is like."

Joycetown House was the last link between the present time and the past. In the beginning of the century a duellist lived there; the terror of the countryside he, for he was never known to miss his man. For the slightest offence, real or imaginary, he sent seconds demanding redress. No more than his ancestors, who had doubtless lived on the islands, in Castle Island and Castle Hag, could he live without fighting. But when he completed his round dozen, a priest said, "If we don't put a stop to his fighting, there won't be a gentleman left in the country," and wrote to him to that effect.

The story runs how Joyce, knowing the feeling of the country was against him, tried to keep the peace. But the blood fever came on him again, and he called out his nearest neighbour, Browne of the Neale, the only friend he had in the world. Browne lived at Neale House, just over the border, in County Galway, so the gentlemen arranged to fight in a certain field near the mearing. It was Browne of Neale who was the first to arrive. Joyce, having to come a dozen miles, was a few minutes late. As soon as his gig was seen, the people, who were in hiding, came out, and they put themselves between him and Browne, telling him up to his face there was to be no fighting that day! And the priest, who was at the head of them, said the same; but Joyce, who knew his countrymen, paid no heed, but stood up in the gig, and, looking round him, said, "Now, boys, which is it to be? The Mayo cock or the Galway cock?" No sooner did he speak these words than they began to cheer him, and in spite of all the priest could say they carried him into the field in which he shot Browne of the Neale.

"A queer people, the queerest in the world," Father

Oliver thought, as he pulled a thorn-bush out of the doorway and stood looking round. There were some rough chimney-pieces high up in the grass-grown walls, but beyond these really nothing to be seen, and he wandered out seeking traces of terraces along the hillside.

On meeting a countryman out with his dogs he tried to inquire about the state of the road.

"I wouldn't be saying, your reverence, that you mightn't get the car through by keeping close to the wall; but Christy mustn't let the horse out of a walk."

The countryman said he would go a piece of the road with them, and tell Christy the spots he'd have to look out for.

"But your work?"

"There's no work doing now to speak of, your reverence."

The three of them together just managed to remove a fallen tree, which seemed the most serious obstacle, and the countryman said once they were over the top of the hill they would be all right; the road wasn't so bad after that.

Half a mile further on Father Oliver found himself in sight of the main road, and of the cottage that his sister Mary had lived in before she joined Eliza in the convent.

To have persuaded Mary to take this step proved Eliza's superiority more completely than anything else she had done, so Father Oliver often said, adding that he didn't know what mightn't have happened to poor Mary if she had remained in the world. For her life up to the time she entered the convent was little else than a series of failures. She was a shop-assistant, but standing behind the counter gave her varicose veins; and she went to Dublin as nursery-governess. Father Oliver had heard of musical studies: she used to play the guitar. But the instrument was not popular in Dublin, so she

gave it up, and returned to Tinnick with the intention of starting a rabbit and poultry farm. Who put this idea into her head was her secret, and when he received Eliza's letter telling him of this last experiment, he remembered throwing up his hands. Of course, it could only end in failure, in a loss of money; and when he read that she was going to take the pretty cottage on the road to Tinnick, he had become suddenly sad.

"Why should she have selected that cottage, the only pretty one in the county? Wouldn't any other do just as well for her foolish experiment?"

CHAP. VI.

THE flowered cottage on the road to Tinnick stood in the midst of trees, on a knoll some few feet above the roadway, and Father Oliver, when he was a boy, often walked out by himself from Tinnick to see the hollyhocks and the sunflowers; they overtopped the palings, the sunflowers looking like saucy country girls and the hollyhocks like grand ladies, delicate and refined, in pink muslin dresses. He used to stand by the gate looking into the garden, delighted by its luxuriance, for there were clumps of sweet pea and beds of red carnations and roses everywhere, and he always remembered the violets and pansies he saw before he went away to Maynooth. He never remembered seeing the garden in bloom again. He was seven years at Maynooth, and when he came home for his vacations it was too late or too early in the season. He was interested in other things; and during his curacy at Kilronan he rarely went to Tinnick, and when he did, he took the other road, so that he might see Father Peter.

He was practically certain that the last time he saw the garden in bloom was just before he went to Maynooth. However this might be, it was certain he would

never see it in bloom again. Mary had left the cottage a ruin and it was sad to think of the clean, thick thatch and the whitewashed walls covered with creeper and China roses, for now the thatch was black and mouldy; and of all the flowers only a few stocks survived; the rose-trees were gone—the rabbits had eaten them. Weeds overtopped the currant and gooseberry bushes; here and there was a trace of box edging. "But soon," he said, "all traces will be gone, the roof will fall in, and the garden will become part of the waste." His eyes roved over the country into which he was going—almost a waste; a meagre black soil, with here and there a thorn-bush and a peasant's cabin. Father Oliver knew every potato field and every wood, and he waited for the elms that lined the roadway a mile ahead of him, a long, pleasant avenue that he knew well, showing above the high wall that encircled a nobleman's domain. Somewhere in the middle of that park was a great white house with pillars, and the story he had heard from his mother, and that roused his childish imaginations, was that Lord Carra was hated by the town of Tinnick, for he cared nothing for Ireland and was said to be a man of loose living, in love with his friend's wife, who came to Tinnick for visits, sometimes with, sometimes without, her husband. It may have been his Lordship's absenteeism, as well as the scandal the lady gave, that had prompted a priest to speak against Lord Carra from the altar, if not directly, indirectly. "Both are among the gone," Father Oliver said to himself. "No one speaks of them now; myself hasn't given them a thought this many a year——" His memories broke off suddenly, for a tree had fallen, carrying a large hunch of the wall with it, but without revealing the house, only a wooded prospect through which a river glided. "The Lord's mistress must have walked many a time by the banks of that river," he said. But why was he thinking of her again? Was it the ugly

cottage that put thoughts of her into his mind? for she had done nothing to alleviate the lives of the poor, who lived without cleanliness and without light, like animals in a den. Or did his thoughts run on that woman, whom he had never seen, because Tinnick was against her and the priest had spoken slightingly of the friends that Lord Carra brought from England? The cause of his thoughts might be that he was going to offer Nora Glynn to his sister as music-mistress. But what connection between Nora Glynn and this dead woman? None. But he was going to propose Nora Glynn to Eliza, and the best line of argument would be that Nora would cost less than anyone as highly qualified as she. Nuns were always anxious to get things cheap, but he must not let them get Nora too cheap. But the question of price wouldn't arise between him and Eliza. Eliza would see that the wrong he did to Nora was preying on his conscience, and that he'd never be happy until he had made atonement—that was the light in which she would view the matter, so it would be better to let things take their natural course and to avoid making plans. The more he thought of what he should say to Eliza, the less likely was he to speak effectively; and feeling that he had better rely on the inspiration of the moment, he sought distraction from his errand by noting the beauty of the hillside. He had always liked the way the road dipped and then ascended steeply to the principal street in the town. There were some pretty houses in the dip—houses with narrow doorways and long windows, built, no doubt, in the beginning of the nineteenth century—and his ambition was once to live in one of these houses.

The bridge was an eighteenth-century bridge, with a foaming weir on the left, and on the right there was a sentimental walk under linden-trees, and there were usually some boys seated on the parapet fishing. He would have liked to stop the car, so remote did the ruined

mills seem—so like things of long ago that time had mercifully weaned from the stress and struggle of life.

At the corner of the main street was the house in which he was born. The business had passed into other hands, but the old name—"Gogarty's Drapery Stores"—remained. Across the way were the butcher and the grocer, and a little higher up the inn at which the commercial travellers lodged. He recalled their numerous leather trunks, and for a moment stood a child again, seeing them drive away on post-cars. A few more shops had been added—very few—and then the town dwindled quickly, slated roofs giving way to thatched cottages, and of the same miserable kind that was wont to provoke his antipathy when he was a boy.

This sinful dislike of poverty he overcame in early manhood. A high religious enthusiasm enabled him to overcome it, but his instinctive dislike of the lowly life—intellectual lowliness as well as physical—gathered within these cottages, seemed to have returned again. He asked himself if he were wanting in natural compassion, and if all that he had of goodness in him were a debt he owed to the Church. It was in patience rather than in pity maybe that he was lacking; and pursuing this idea, he recalled the hopes he entertained when he railed off a strip of ground in front of Bridget Clery's house. But that strip of garden had inspired no spirit of emulation. Eliza was perhaps more patient than he, and he began to wonder if she had any definite aim in view, and if the spectacle of the convent, with its show of nuns walking under the trees, would eventually awaken some desire of refinement in the people, if the money their farms now yielded would produce some sort of improvement in their cottages, the removal of those dreadfully heavy smells, and a longing for colour that would find expression in the planting of flowers.

They gave their money willingly enough for the adorn-

ment of their chapel, for stained glass, incense, candles, and for music, and were it not for the services of the Church he didn't know into what barbarism the people mightn't have fallen: the tones of the organ sustaining clear voices of nuns singing a Mass by Mozart must sooner or later inspire belief in the friendliness of pure air and the beauty of flowers. Flowers are the only beautiful things within the reach of these poor people. Roses all may have, and it was pleasant to think that there is nothing more entirely natural or charming in the life of man than his love of flowers: it preceded his love of music; no doubt an appreciation of something better in the way of art than a jig played on the pipes would follow close on the purification of the home.

Nora Glynn was beautiful, and her personality was winning and charming, her playing delightful, and her singing might have inspired the people to cultivate beauty. But she was going to the convent. The convent had gotten her. It was a pity. Mrs. O'Mara's scandalous stories, insinuating lies, had angered him till he could bear with her no longer, and he had put her out the door. He didn't believe that Eliza had ever said she could give Nora more than she was earning in Garranard. It mattered very little if she had, for it had so fallen out that she was going to get her. He begrudged them Nora. But Eliza was going to get her, and he'd have to make the best terms he could.

But he could not constrain his thoughts to the present moment. They would go back to the fateful afternoon when he ran across the fields to ask Nora if what Mrs. O'Mara had said of her were true. If he had only waited! If she had come to him to confession on Saturday, as he expected she would! If something had prevented him from preaching on Sunday! A bad cold might have prevented him from speaking, and she might have gone away for a while, and, when her baby was born, she might have

come back. It could have been easily arranged. But fate had ordered her life otherwise, and here he was in the Tinnick Convent, hoping to make her some poor amends for the wrong he had done her. Would Eliza help him?—that was the question he asked himself as he crossed the beeswaxed floor and stood looking at the late afternoon sunlight glancing through the trees, falling across the green sward.

"How do you do, Oliver?"

His face lighted up, but it changed expression and became grey again. He had expected to see Eliza, tall and thin, with yellow eyebrows and pale eyes. Hers was a good, clearly-cut face, like his own, whereas Mary's was quite different. Yet a family likeness stared through Mary's heavy white face. Her eyes were smaller than his, and she already began to raise them and lower them, and to look at him askance, in just the way he hated. Somehow or other she always contrived to make him feel uncomfortable, and the present occasion was no exception. She was already reproving him, hoping he was not disappointed at seeing her, and he had to explain that he expected to see Eliza, and that was why he looked surprised. She must not confuse surprise with disappointment. He was very glad to see her.

"I know I am not as interesting as Eliza," she began, "but I thought you might like to see me, and if I hadn't come at once I shouldn't have had an opportunity of seeing you alone."

"She has something to confide," Father Oliver said to himself, and he hoped that her confidences might be cut short by the timely arrival of Eliza.

"Eliza is engaged at present. She told Sister Agatha to tell you that she would be with you presently. I met Sister Agatha in the passage, and said I would take the message myself. I suppose I oughtn't to have done so,

but if I hadn't I shouldn't have had an opportunity of speaking with you."

"Why is that?"

"I don't think she likes me to see you alone."

"My dear Mary!"

"You don't know, Oliver, what it is to live in a convent, and your own sister the head of it."

"I should have thought, Mary, that it was especially pleasant, and that you were especially fortunate. And as for thinking that Eliza is not wishing you to see me alone, I am sure——"

"You are sure I'm mistaken."

"What reason could she have?"

"Eliza doesn't wish the affairs of the convent discussed. You know, I suppose, that the building of the new wing has put a burden of debt on the convent."

"I know that; so why should Eliza——"

"Eliza tries to prevent my seeing any of the visitors. Now, do you think that quite right and fair towards one's sister?"

Father Oliver tried to prevent himself from smiling, but he sympathized so entirely with Eliza's efforts to prevent Mary from discussing the affairs of the convent that he could hardly keep down the smile that rose to his lips. He could see Eliza's annoyance on coming into the parlour and finding Mary detailing all the gossip and confiding her own special woes, for the most part imaginary, to a visitor. Nor would Mary refrain from touching on the Reverend Mother's shortcomings. He was so much amused that he might have smiled if it had not suddenly come to his mind that Mary might leave the convent and insist on living with him; and a little scared he began to think of what he could say to pacify her, remembering in the midst of his confusion and embarrassment that Mary was professed last year, and therefore could not leave the convent; and this knowledge filled him with such

joy that he could not keep back the words, but must remind his sister that she had had ample opportunity of considering if she were suited to the religious life.

"You see, Mary, you should have thought of all this before you were professed."

"I shan't take my final vows till next year."

"But, my dear Mary, once a woman has taken the black veil . . . it is the same thing, you know."

"Not quite, otherwise there would be no meaning in the delay."

"You don't mean to say that you're thinking of leaving the convent, Mary?"

"Not exactly, but it is very hard on me, Oliver. I was thinking of writing to you, but I hoped that you would come to see us. You have been a long time now without coming."

"Well, Mary——"

"Eliza loves ruling everybody, and just because I am her sister she is harder on me than anyone else. Only the other day she was furious with me because I stopped at confession a few minutes longer than usual. 'I think,' she said, 'you might spare Father Higgins your silly scruples.' Now, how is one to stop in a convent if one's own sister interferes in one's confessions?"

"Well, Mary, what are you thinking of doing?"

"There are some French nuns who have just come over and want to open a school, and are looking for Irish subjects. I was thinking they'd like to have me. You see, I wouldn't have to go through the novitiate again, for they want an experienced person to teach them English and to mind the school for them. It is really a mistake to be under one's own sister."

At that moment the door opened and Eliza came in, apologizing for having kept her brother so long waiting.

"You see, my dear Oliver, I've had two mothers here

this morning, and you know what parents are. I suppose Mary has told you about our difficulties. Now, do you mean to say that you have found a person who will suit us? . . . It is really very kind of you."

"I can't say for certain, Eliza. Of course, it is difficult for me to know exactly what you want, but, so far as I know, I think the person I have in my mind will suit you."

"But has she a diploma from the Academy? We must have a certificate."

"I think she'll suit you, but we'll talk about her presently. Don't you think we might go into the garden?"

"Yes, it will be pleasanter in the garden. And you, Mary—you've had your little chat with Oliver."

"I was just going, Eliza. If I'd known that Oliver wanted to speak privately to you, I'd have gone sooner."

"No, no, I assure you, Mary."

Mary held out her hand to her brother, saying:

"I suppose I shall not see you again, unless, perhaps, you're stopping the night with Father Higgins. It would be nice if you could do that. You could say Mass for us in the morning."

Father Oliver shook his head.

"I'm afraid I must get back to-night."

"Well, then, good-bye." And Mary went out of the room regretfully, like one who knows that the moment her back is turned all her faults will become the subject of conversation.

"I hear from Mary that some French nuns are coming over, and want to open a school. I hope that won't interfere with yours, Eliza; you spent a great deal of money upon the new wing."

"It will interfere very much indeed; but I'm trying to get some of the nuns to come here, and I hope the Bishop will not permit a new foundation. It's very hard upon us Irishwomen if we are to be eaten out of house

and home by pious foreigners. I'm in correspondence with the Bishop about it. As for Mary——"

"You surely don't think she's going to leave?"

"No, I don't suppose she'll leave; it would be easier for me if she did, but it would give rise to any amount of talk. And where would she go if she did leave, unless she lived with you?"

"My house is too small; besides, she didn't speak of leaving, only that she hadn't yet taken her final vows. I explained that no one will distinguish between the black veil and final vows. Am I not right?"

"I think those vows will take a great weight off your mind, Oliver. I wish I could say as much for myself."

The Reverend Mother opened a glass door, and brother and sister stood for some time admiring the flower vases that lined the terrace.

"I can't get her to water the geraniums."

"If you'll tell me where I can get a can——"

"You'll excuse me, Reverend Mother."

It was the Sister in charge of the laundry, and, seeing her crippled arm, Father Oliver remembered that her dress had become entangled in the machinery. He didn't know, however, that the fault lay with Mary, who was told off to watch the machinery and to stop it instantly in case of necessity.

"She can't keep her attention fixed on anything, not even on her prayers, and what she calls piety I should call idleness. It's terrible to have to do with stupid women, and the convent is so full of them that I often wonder what is the good of having a convent at all."

"But, Eliza, you don't regret——"

"No, of course I don't regret. I should do just the same again. But don't let us waste our time talking about vocations. I hear enough of that here. I want you to tell me about the music-mistress; that's what interests me."

And when Father Oliver had told her the whole story and showed her Father O'Grady's letter, she said:

"You know I always thought you were a little hard on Miss Glynn. Father O'Grady's letter convinces me that you were."

"My dear Eliza, I don't want advice; I've suffered enough."

"Oliver dear, forgive me." And the nun put out her hand to detain him.

"Well, don't say again, Eliza, that you always thought. It's irritating, and it does no good."

"Her story is known, but she could live in the convent; that would shelter her from any sort of criticism. I don't see why she shouldn't take the habit of one of the postulants, but——"

The priest waited for his sister to speak, and after waiting a little while he asked her what she was going to say.

"I was going to ask you," said the nun, waking from her reverie, "if you have written to Miss Glynn."

"Yes, I wrote to her."

"And she's willing to come back?"

"I haven't spoken to her about that. It didn't occur to me until afterwards, but I can write at once if you consent."

"I may be wrong, Oliver, but I don't think she'll care to leave London and come back here, where she is known."

"But, Eliza, a girl likes to live in her own country. Mind you, I am responsible. I drove her out of her country among strangers. She's living among Protestants."

"I don't think that will trouble her very much."

"I don't know why you say that, Eliza. Do you think that a woman cannot repent? that because she happens to have sinned once——"

"No; I suppose there are repentant sinners, but I think we most often go on as we begin. Now, you see, Father O'Grady says that she's getting on very well in London, and we like to live among those who appreciate us."

"Well, Eliza, of course, if you start with the theory that no one can repent——"

"I didn't say that, Oliver. But she wouldn't tell you who the man was. She seems a person of character—I mean, she doesn't seem to be lacking in strength of character."

"She's certainly a most excellent musician. You'll find no one like her, and you may be able to get her very cheap. And if your school doesn't pay——"

A shade passed across the Reverend Mother's face.

"There's no doubt that the new wing has cost us a great deal of money."

"Then there are the French nuns——"

"My dear Oliver, if you wish me to engage Miss Glynn as music-mistress I'll do so. There's no use speaking to me about the French nuns. I'll engage her because you ask me, but I cannot pay her as much as those who have diplomas. How much do you think she'd come for?"

"I don't know what she's earning in London, but I suppose you can pay her an average wage. You could pay her according to results."

"What you say is quite true, Oliver." The priest and the nun continued their walk up and down in front of the unfinished building. "But you don't know, Oliver, if she's willing to leave London. You'll have to write and find out."

"Very well, Eliza, I'll write. You'll be able to offer her as much as she was earning in my parish as schoolmistress. That's fifty pounds a year."

"It's more than we can afford, Oliver, but if you wish it."

"I do wish it, Eliza. Thank you. You've taken a great weight off my mind."

They passed into the house, and, stopping in front of the writing-table, the nun looked to see if there were paper and envelopes in the blotter.

"You'll find everything you want, even sealing-wax," she said. "Now I'll leave you."

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Tinnick Convent,
"*June* 4, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I take it for granted that you received the letter I sent you two days ago, telling you how much I appreciated your kindness in asking Father O'Grady to write to tell me that you were quite safe and getting on well. Since writing that letter I feel more keenly than ever that I owe you reparation, for it was through an error of judgment on my part that you are now an exile from your own country. Everyone is agreed that I have committed an error of judgment. My sister, the Mother Superior of this convent from where I am writing, is of that opinion. The moment I mentioned your name she began, 'I always thought that——' and I begged of her to spare me advice on the subject, saying that it was not for advice that I came to her, but to ask her to help me to make atonement, which she could do by engaging you to teach music in her convent. You see, I had heard that my sister was in a difficulty. The new wing is nearly completed, and she could get the best families in Ireland to send their daughters to be educated in her convent if she could provide sufficient musical instruction. I thought you might like to live in your own country, now that your

thoughts have again turned towards God, and I can imagine the unpleasantness it must be to a Catholic to live in a Protestant country. I told my sister this, and she answered that if you wish to come over here, and if Father O'Grady advises it, she will take you as music-mistress. You will live in the convent. You can enter it, if you wish, as a postulant, or if you should remain an extern teacher the salary they will give you will be fifty pounds a year. I know you can make more than that in London, but you can live more cheaply here, and you will be among friends.

"I shall be glad to hear from you on this subject.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Oliver Gogarty, P.P."

When he looked up, the darkness under the trees surprised him, and the geraniums so faintly red on the terrace, and his sister passing up and down like a phantom.

"Eliza."

He heard her beads drop, and out of a loose sleeve a slim hand took the letter. There was not enough light in the room to read by, and she remained outside, leaning against the glass door.

"You haven't written exactly the letter I should have written, but, then, we're quite different. I should have written a cold and more business-like letter." His face changed expression, and she added: "I'm sorry if I'm unsympathetic, Oliver."

The touch of her hand and the look in her eyes surprised him, for Eliza was not demonstrative, and he wondered what had called forth this sudden betrayal of feeling. He expected her to ask him not to send the letter, but instead of doing so she said:

"If the letter were written otherwise it wouldn't be like yourself, Oliver. Send it, and if she leaves London and comes back here, I will think better of her. It will

be proof that she has repented. I see you'll not have an easy mind until you make atonement. You exaggerate, I think; but everyone for himself in a matter like this."

"Thank you, Eliza. You always understand."

"Not always. I failed to understand when you wanted to set up a hermitage on Castle Island."

"Yes, you did; you have better sense than I. Yet I feel we are more alike than the others. You have counted for a great deal in my life, Eliza. Do you remember saying that you intended to be Reverend Mother? And now you are Reverend Mother."

"I don't think I said 'I intended.' But I felt that if I became a nun, one day or another I should be Reverend Mother; one knows most often than not what is going to happen—one's own fate, I mean."

"I wonder if Mary knows?"

"If she does, I wish she'd tell us."

"We'll have time to walk round the garden once more. You have no idea what a pleasure it is for me to see you—to talk with you like this."

And, talking of Mary, they walked slowly, forgetful of everything but each other.

A bell rang.

"I must be going; it will be late before I get home."

"Which way are you going? Round by Kilronan or across the Bridge of Keel?"

"I came by Kilronan. I think I'll take the other way. There will be a moon to-night."

Brother and sister entered the convent.

"You'll enjoy the drive?"

"Yes." And he fell to thinking of the drive home by the southern road, the mountains unfolding their many aspects in the grey moonlight, and melting away in misty perspectives.

CHAP. VII.

From Miss Nora Glynn to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"4, Wilson Street,
"London,
"*June* 8, 19—.

"Father Gogarty,

"I did not answer your first letter because the letters that came into my mind to write, however they might begin, soon turned to bitterness, and I felt that writing bitter letters would not help me to forget the past. But your second letter with its proposal that I should return to Ireland to teach music in a convent school forces me to break silence, and it makes me regret that I gave Father O'Grady permission to write to you; he asked me so often, and his kindness is so winning, that I could not refuse him anything. He said you would certainly have begun to see that you had done me a wrong, and I often answered that I saw no reason why I should trouble to soothe your conscience. I do not wish to return to Ireland; I am, as Father O'Grady told you, earning my own living, my work interests me, and very soon I shall have forgotten Ireland. That is the best thing that can happen, that I should forget Ireland, and that you should forget the wrong you did me. Put the whole thing, and me, out of your mind; and now, good-bye, Father Gogarty.

"Nora Glynn."

"Good heavens! how she hates me, and she'll hate me till her dying day. She'll never forget. And this is the end of it, a bitter, unforgiving letter." He sat down to think, and it seemed to him that she wouldn't have written this letter if she had known the agony of mind he had

been through. But of this he wasn't sure. No, no; he could not believe her spiteful. And he walked up and down the room, trying to quell the bitterness rising up within him. No other priest would have taken the trouble; they would have just forgotten all about it, and gone about congratulating themselves on their wise administration. But he had acted rightly, Father O'Grady had approved of what he had done; and this was his reward. She'll never come back, and will never forgive him; and ever since writing to her he had indulged in dreams of her return to Ireland, thinking how pleasant it would be to go down to the lake in the mornings, and stand at the end of the sandy spit looking across the lake towards Tinnick, full of the thought that she was there with his sisters earning her living. She wouldn't be in his parish, but they'd have been friends, neighbours, and he'd have accepted the loss of his organist as his punishment. Eva Maguire was no good; there would never be any music worth listening to in his parish again. Such sternness as her letter betrayed was not characteristic of her; she didn't understand, and never would. Catherine's step awoke him; the awaking was painful, and he couldn't collect his thoughts enough to answer Catherine; and feeling that he must appear to her daft, he tried to speak, but his speech was only babble.

"You haven't read your other letter, your reverence."

He recognized the handwriting; it was from Father O'Grady.

From Father O'Grady to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"*June* 8, 19—.

"My dear Father Gogarty,

"I was very glad to hear that Miss Glynn told her story truthfully; for if she exaggerated or indulged in equivocation, it would be a great disappointment to me

and to her friends, and would put me in a very difficult position, for I should have to tell certain friends of mine, to whom I recommended her, that she was not all that we imagined her to be. But all's well that ends well; and you will be glad to hear that I have appointed her organist in my church. It remains, therefore, only for me to thank you for your manly letter, acknowledging the mistake you have made.

"I can imagine the anxiety it must have caused you, and the great relief it must have been to you to get my letter. Although Miss Glynn spoke with bitterness, she did not try to persuade me that you were naturally hard-hearted or cruel. The impression that her story left on my mind was that your allusions to her in your sermon were unpremeditated. Your letter is proof that I was not mistaken, and I am sure the lesson you have received will bear fruit. I trust that you will use your influence to restrain other priests from similar violence. It is only by gentleness and kindness that we can do good. I shall be glad to see you if you ever come to London.

"I am, sir,

"Very sincerely yours,

"Michael O'Grady."

"All's well that ends well. So that's how he views it! A different point of view." And feeling that he was betraying himself to Catherine, he put both letters into his pocket and went out of the house. But he had not gone many yards when he met a parishioner with a long story to tell, happily not a sick call, only a dispute about land. So he invented an excuse postponing his intervention until the morrow, and when he returned home tired with roaming, he stopped on his door-step. "The matter is over now, her letter is final," he said. But he awoke in a different mood next morning; everything ap-

peared to him in a different light, and he wondered, surprised to find that he could forget so easily; and taking her letter out of his pocket, he read it again. "It's a hard letter, but she's a wise woman. Much better for us both to forget each other. 'Good-bye, Father Gogarty,' she said; 'Good-bye, Nora Glynn,' say I." And he walked about his garden tending his flowers, wondering at his light-heartedness.

She thought of her own interests, and would get on very well in London, and Father O'Grady had been lucky too. Nora was an excellent organist. But if he went to London he would meet her. A meeting could hardly be avoided—and after that letter! Perhaps it would be wiser if he didn't go to London. What excuse? O'Grady would write again. He had been so kind. In any case he must answer his letter, and that was vexatious. But was he obliged to answer it? O'Grady wouldn't misunderstand his silence. But there had been misunderstandings enough; and before he had walked the garden's length half a dozen conclusive reasons for writing occurred to him. First of all Father O'Grady's kindness in writing to ask him to stay with him, added to which the fact that Nora would, of course, tell Father O'Grady she had been invited to teach in the convent; her vanity would certainly urge her to do this, and Heaven only knows what account she would give of his proposal. There would be his letter, but she mightn't show it. So perhaps on the whole it would be better that he should write telling O'Grady what had happened. And after his dinner as he sat thinking, a letter came into his mind; the first sentences formulated themselves so suddenly that he was compelled to go to his writing-table.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Father O'Grady.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*June* 12, 19—.

"Dear Father O'Grady,

"I enclose a letter which I received three days ago from Miss Nora Glynn, and I think you will agree with me that the letter is a harsh one, and that, all things considered, it would have been better if she had stinted herself to saying that I had committed an error of judgment which she forgave. She did not, however, choose to do this. As regards my sister's invitation to her to come over here to teach, she was, of course, quite right to consider her own interests. She can make more money in London than she could in Ireland. I forgot that she couldn't bring her baby with her, remembering only that my eldest sister is Mother Abbess in the Tinnick Convent—a very superior woman, if I may venture to praise my own sister. The convent was very poor at one time, but she has made the school a success, and, hearing that she wanted someone who would teach music and singing, I proposed to her that the should engage Miss Glynn, with whose story she was already acquainted. She did not think that Miss Glynn would return to Ireland; and in this opinion she showed her good judgment. She was always a wonderful judge of character. But she could see that I was anxious to atone for any wrong that I might have done Miss Glynn, and after some hesitation she consented, saying: 'Well, Oliver, if you wish it.'

"Miss Glynn did not accept the proposal, and I suppose that the episode now ends so far as I am concerned. She has fallen into good hands; she is making her living, thanks to your kindness. But I dare not think what might not have happened if she had not met you. Perhaps when you have time you will write again; I shall be glad to hear if she succeeds in improving your choir.

My conscience is now at rest; there is a term, though it may not be at the parish boundary, when our responsibility ceases.

"Thanking you again, and hoping one of these days to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance,

"I am very truly yours,

"Oliver Gogarty."

From Father O'Grady to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"*June* 18, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"Thank you for sending me Miss Glynn's letter, and I agree with you when you describe it as harsh; but I understand it in a way. Miss Glynn came over to London almost penniless, and expecting the birth of her illegitimate child. She suffered all that a woman suffers in such circumstances. I do not want to harass you unnecessarily by going over it all again, but I do wish you to forgive her somewhat intemperate letter. I'll speak to her about it, and I am sure she will write to you in a more kindly spirit later on; meanwhile, rest assured that she is doing well, and not forgetful of the past. I shall try to keep a watchful eye over her, seeing that she attends to her duties every month; there is no better safeguard. But in truth I have no fear for her, and am unable to understand how she could have been guilty of so grave a sin, especially in Ireland. She seems here most circumspect, even strict, in her manner. She is an excellent musician, and has improved my choir. I have been tempted to comply with her request and spend some more money upon the singing. . . .

"While writing these lines I was interrupted. My servant brought me a letter from Miss Glynn, telling me that a great chance had come her way. It appears that Mr. Walter Poole, the father of one of her pupils,

has offered her the post of secretaryship, and she would like to put into practice the shorthand and typewriting that she has been learning for the last six months. Her duties, she says, will be of a twofold nature: she will help Mr. Poole with his literary work and she will also give music lessons to his daughter Edith. Mr. Poole lives in Berkshire, and wants her to come down at once, which means she will have to leave me in the lurch. 'You will be without an organist,' she writes, 'and will have to put up with Miss Ellen McGowan until you can get a better. She may improve—I hope and think she will; and I'm sorry to give trouble to one who has been so kind to me, but, you see, I have a child to look after, and it is difficult to make both ends meet on less than three pounds a week. More money I cannot hope to earn in my present circumstances; I am therefore going down to Berkshire to-morrow, so I shall not see you again for some time. Write and tell me you are not angry with me.'

"On receiving this letter, I went round to Miss Glynn's lodgings, and found her in the midst of her packing. We talked a long while, and very often it seemed to me that I was going to persuade her, but when it came to the point she shook her head. Offer her more money I could not, but I promised to raise her wages to two pounds a week next year if it were possible to do so. I don't think it is the money; I think it is change that tempts her. Well, it tempts us all, and though I am much disappointed at losing her, I cannot be angry with her, for I cannot forget that I often want change myself, and the longing to get out of London is sometimes almost irresistible. I do not know your part of the country, but I do know what an Irish lake is like, and I often long to see one again. And very often, I suppose, you would wish to exchange the romantic solitude of your parish for the hurly-burly of a town, and for its thick, impure air you

would be willing—for a time only, of course—to change the breezes of your mountain-tops.

"Very truly yours,

"Michael O'Grady."

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Father O'Grady.

"Garranard, Bohola,

"*June* 22, 19—.

"Dear Father O'Grady,

"No sooner had I begun to feel easier in my conscience and to dream that my responsibilities were at an end than your letter comes, and I am thrown back into all my late anxieties regarding Nora Glynn's future, for which I am and shall always be responsible.

"It was my words that drove her out of Ireland into a great English city in which some dreadful fate of misery and death might have befallen her if you had not met her. But God is good, and he sent you to her, and everything seems to have happened for the best. She was in your hands, and I felt safe. But now she has taken her life into her own hands again, thinking she can manage it without anybody's help!

"The story you tell seems simple enough, but it doesn't sound all right. Why should she go away to Berkshire to help Mr. Walter Poole with his literature without giving you longer notice? It seems strange to write to one who has taken all the trouble you have to find her work—'I have discovered a post that suits me better and am going away to-morrow.' Of course she has her child to think of. But have you made inquiries? I suppose you must have done. You would not let her go away to a man of whom you know nothing. She says that he is the father of one of her pupils. But she doesn't know him, yet she is going to live in his house to help him with his literature. Have you inquired, dear Father O'Grady,

what this man's writings are, if he is a Catholic or a Protestant?' I should not like Miss Nora Glynn to go into a Protestant household, where she would hear words of disrespect for the religion she has been brought up in.

"As I write I ask myself if there is a Catholic chapel within walking distance; and if there isn't, will he undertake to send her to Mass every Sunday? I hope you have made all these inquiries, and if you have not made them, will you make them at once and write to me and relieve my anxiety? You are aware of the responsibilities I have incurred and will appreciate the anxiety that I feel.

"Yours very sincerely,

"Oliver Gogarty."

It seemed to Father Oliver so necessary that Father O'Grady should get his letter as soon as possible that he walked to Bohola; but soon after dropping the letter in the box he began to think that he might have written more judiciously, and on his way home he remembered that he had told Father O'Grady, and very explicitly, that he should have made inquiries regarding Mr. Walter Poole's literature before he allowed Nora Glynn to go down to Berkshire to help him with his literary work. Of course he hoped, and it was only natural that he should hope, that Father O'Grady had made all reasonable inquiries; but it seemed to him now that he had expressed himself somewhat peremptorily. Father O'Grady was an old man—how old he did not know—but himself was a young man, and he did not know in what humour Father O'Grady might read his letter. If the humour wasn't propitious he might understand it as an impertinence. It vexed him that he had shown so much agitation, and he stopped to think. But it was so natural that he should be concerned about Nora Glynn. All the same, his anxiety might strike Father O'Grady as exaggerated. A temperate letter, he reflected, is always bet-

ter; and the evening was spent in writing another letter to Father O'Grady, a much longer one, in which he thanked Father O'Grady for asking him to come to see him if he should ever find himself in London. "Of course," he wrote, "I shall be only too pleased to call on you, and no doubt we shall have a great deal to talk about—two Irishmen always have; and when I feel the need of change imminent, I will try to go to London, and do you, Father O'Grady, when you need a change, come to Ireland. You write: 'I do not know your part of the country, but I know what an Irish lake is like, and I often long to see one again.' Well, come and see my lake; it's very beautiful. Woods extend down to the very shores with mountain peaks uplifting behind the woods, and on many islands there are ruins of the castles of old time. Not far from my house it narrows into a strait, and after passing this strait it widens out into what might almost be called another lake. We are trying to persuade the Government to build a bridge, but it is difficult to get anything done. My predecessor and myself have been in correspondence on this subject with the Board of Works; it often seems as if success were about to come, but it slips away, and everything has to be begun again. I should like to show you Kilronan Abbey, an old abbey unroofed by Cromwell. The people have gone there for centuries, kneeling in the snow and rain. We are sadly in need of subscription. Perhaps one of these days you will be able to help us; but I shall write again on this subject, and as soon as I can get a photograph of the abbey I will send it.

"Very sincerely yours,
"Oliver Gogarty."

"Now, what will Father O'Grady answer to all this?" he said under his breath as he folded up his letter. "A worthy soul, an excellent soul, there's no doubt about

that." And he began to feel sorry for Father O'Grady. But his sorrow was suddenly suspended. If he went to London he wouldn't be likely to see her. "Another change," he said; "things are never the same for long. A week ago I knew where she was; I could see her in her surroundings. Berkshire is not very far from London. But who is Mr. Poole?" And he sat thinking.

A few days after he picked up a letter from his table from Father O'Grady, a long garrulous letter, four pages about Kilronan Abbey, Irish London, convent schools—topics interesting enough in themselves, but lacking in immediate interest. The letter contained only three lines about her. That Mr. Poole explained everything to her, and that she liked her work. The letter dropped from his hand; the hand that had held the letter fell upon his knee, and Father Oliver sat looking through the room. Awaking suddenly, he tried to remember what he had been thinking about, for he had been thinking a long while; but he could not recall his thoughts, and went to his writing-table and began a long letter telling Father O'Grady about Kilronan Abbey and enclosing photographs. And then, feeling compelled to bring himself into as complete union as possible with his correspondent, he sat, pen in hand, uncertain if he should speak of Nora at all. The temptation was by him, and he found excuse in the thought that after all she was the link; without her he would not have known Father O'Grady. And so convinced was he of this that when he mentioned her he did so on account of a supposed obligation to sympathize once again with Father O'Grady's loss of his organist. His letter rambled on about the Masses Nora used to play best and the pieces she used to sing.

A few days after he caught sight of her handwriting on his breakfast-table, and he sat reading the letter, to Catherine's annoyance, who said the rashers were getting cold.

From Miss Nora Glynn to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"Beechwood Hall,
"Berkshire,
"*July* 20, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"One is not always in a mood to give credit to others for good intentions, especially when one returns home at the close of day disappointed, and I wrote a hard, perhaps a cruel, letter; but I'm feeling differently now. The truth is that your letter arrived at an unfortunate moment when things were going badly with me."

"I'm forgiven," Father Oliver cried—"I'm forgiven;" and his joy was so great that the rest of the letter seemed unnecessary, but he continued to read:

"Father O'Grady has no doubt told you that I have given up my post of organist in his church, Mr. Poole having engaged me to teach his daughter music and to act as his secretary. In a little letter which I received about a fortnight ago from him he told me he had written to you, and it appears that you have recovered from your scruples of conscience, and have forgotten the wrong you did me; but if I know you at all, you are deceiving yourself. You will never forget the wrong you did me. But I shall forget. I am not sure that it has not already passed out of my mind. This will seem contradictory, for didn't I say that I couldn't forget your cruelty in my first letter? I wonder if I meant it when I wrote, 'Put the whole thing and me out of your mind. . . .' I suppose I did at the time, and yet I doubt it. Does anyone want to be forgotten utterly?

"I should have written to you before, but we have been busy. Mr. Poole's book has been promised by the end of the year. It's all in type, but he is never satisfied. To-day he has gone to London to seek information about the altars of the early Israelites. It's a wonderful

book, but I cannot write about it to-day; the sun is shining, the country is looking lovely, and my pupil is begging me to finish my letter and go out with her.

"Yours very sincerely,

"Nora Glynn."

"So forgiveness has come at last," he said; and as he walked along the shore he fell to thinking that very soon all her life in Garranard would be forgotten. "She seems interested in her work," he muttered; and his mind wandered over the past, trying to arrive at a conclusion, if there was or was not a fundamental seriousness in her character, inclining on the whole to think there was, for if she was not serious fundamentally, she would not have been chosen by Mr. Poole for his secretary. "My little schoolmistress, the secretary of a great scholar! How very extraordinary! But why is it extraordinary? When will she write again?" And every night he wished for the dawn, and every morning he asked if there were any letters for him. "No, your reverence, no letters this morning;" and when Catherine handed him some envelopes they only contained bills or uninteresting letters from the parishioners or letters from the Board of Works about the bridge in which he could no longer feel any interest whatever.

At last he began to think he had said something to offend her, and to find out if this were so he would have to write to Father O'Grady telling him that Miss Glynn had written saying she had forgiven him. Her forgiveness had brought great relief; but Miss Glynn said in her letter that she was alone in Berkshire, Mr. Poole having gone to London to seek information regarding the altars of the early Israelites.

From Father O'Grady to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"*August* 1, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"I am sorry I cannot give you the information you require regarding the nature of Mr. Poole's writings, and if I may venture to advise you, I will say that I do not think any good will come to her by your inquiry into the matter. She is one of those women who resent all control; and, if I may judge from a letter she wrote to me the other day, she is bent now on educating herself regardless of the conclusions to which her studies may lead her. I shall pray for her, and that God may watch over and guide her is my hope. I am sure it is yours too. She is in God's hands, and we can do nothing to help her. I am convinced of that, and it would be well for you to put her utterly out of your mind.

"I am, very truly yours,

"Michael O'Grady."

"Put her utterly out of my mind," Father Oliver cried aloud; "now what does he mean by that?" And he asked himself if this piece of advice was Father O'Grady's attempt to get even with him for having told him that he should have informed himself regarding Mr. Poole's theological opinions before permitting her to go down to Berkshire.

It did not seem to him that Father O'Grady would stoop to such meanness, but there seemed to be no other explanation, and he fell to thinking of what manner of man was Father O'Grady—an old man he knew him to be, and from the tone of his letters he had judged him a clever man, experienced in the human weakness and conscience. But this last letter! In what light was he to read it? Did O'Grady fail to understand that there is no more intimate association than that of an author and

his secretary? If we are to believe at all in spiritual influences—and who denies them?—can we minimize these? On his way to the writing-table he stopped. Mr. Poole's age—what was it? He imagined him about sixty. "It is at that age," he said, "that men begin to think about the altars of the early Israelites," and praying at intervals that he might be seventy, he wrote a short note thanking Father O'Grady for his advice and promising to bear it in mind. He did not expect to get an answer, nor did he wish for an answer; for he had begun to feel that he and Father O'Grady had drifted apart, and had no further need one for the other.

"Are there no letters this morning?" he asked Catherine.

"None, sir. You haven't had one from London for a long time."

He turned away. "An intolerable woman—intolerable! I shall be obliged to make a change soon," he said, turning away so that Catherine should not see the annoyance that he felt on his face.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*August* 6, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"You said in your very kind letter, which I received a fortnight ago, and which I answered hastily, that on some future occasion you would perhaps tell me about the book Mr. Poole is writing. I wonder if this occasion will ever arise, and, if so, if it be near or far—near, I hope, for interested as I naturally am in your welfare, I have begun to feel some anxiety regarding this book. On the day that——"

"Father O'Grady, your reverence." Father Oliver laid his letter aside, and then hid it in the blotter, regretting his haste and his fumbling hands, which perhaps had put the thought into O'Grady's mind that the letter was to Nora. And so he came forward faintly embarrassed to meet a small pale man, whom he judged to be seventy or thereabouts, coming forward nimbly, bent a little, with a long, thin arm and bony hand extended in a formal languor of welcome. A little disappointing was the first moment, but it passed away quickly, and when his visitor was seated Father Oliver noticed a large nose rising out of the pallor and on either side of it dim blue eyes and some long white locks.

"You're surprised to see me," Father O'Grady said in a low, winning voice. "Of course you're surprised—how could it be otherwise? but I hope you're glad."

"Very glad," Father Oliver answered. "Glad, very glad," he repeated; and begged his visitor to allow him to help him off with his overcoat.

"How pleasant," Father O'Grady said, as soon as he was back in the armchair, as if he felt that the duty fell upon him to find a conversation that would help them across the first five minutes—"how pleasant it is to see a turf fire again! The turf burns gently, mildly, a much pleasanter fire than coal; the two races express themselves in their fires."

"Oh, we're fiery enough over here," Father Oliver returned; and the priests laughed.

"I did not feel that I was really in Ireland," Father O'Grady continued, "till I saw the turf blazing and falling into white ash. You see I haven't been in Ireland for many years."

Father Oliver threw some more sods of turf into the grate, saying: "I'm glad, Father O'Grady, that you enjoy the fire, and I'm indeed glad to see you. I was just thinking——"

"Of me?" Father O'Grady asked, raising his Catholic eyes.

The interruption was a happy one, for Father Oliver would have found himself embarrassed to finish the sentence he had begun. For he would not have liked to have admitted that he had just begun a letter to Nora Glynn, to say, "There it is on the table." Father O'Grady's interruption gave him time to revise his sentence.

"Yes, I was thinking of you, Father O'Grady. Wondering if I might dare to write to you again."

"But why should you be in doubt?" Father O'Grady asked; and then, remembering a certain asperity in Father Oliver's last letter, he thought it prudent to change the conversation. "Well, here I am and unexpected, but, apparently, welcome."

"Very welcome," Father Oliver murmured.

"I'm glad of that," the old man answered; "and now to my story." And he told how a variety of little incidents had come about, enabling him to spend his vacation in Ireland. "A holiday is necessary for every man. And, after all, it is as easy to go from London to Ireland as it is to go to Margate, and much more agreeable. But I believe you are unacquainted with London, and Margate is doubtless unknown to you. Well, I don't know that you've missed much;" and he began to tell of the month he had spent wandering in the old country, and how full of memories he had found it—all sorts of ideas and associations new and old. "Maybe it was you that beguiled me to Ireland; if so, I ought to thank you for a very pleasant month's holiday. Now I'm on my way home, and finding that I could fit in the railway journey I went to Tinnick, and I couldn't go to Tinnick without driving over to Garranard."

"I should think not, indeed," Father Oliver answered quickly. "It was very good of you to think of me, to

undertake the journey to Tinnick and the long drive from Tinnick over here."

"One should never be praised for doing what is agreeable to one to do. I liked you from your letters; you're like your letters, Father Oliver—at least I think you are."

"I'm certain you're like yours," Father Oliver returned, "only I imagined you to speak slower."

"A mumbling old man," Father O'Grady interjected.

"You know I don't mean that," Father Oliver replied, and there was a trace of emotion in his voice. "It was really very good of you to drive over from Tinnick. You say that you only undertook the journey because it pleased you to do so. If that philosophy were accepted, there would be no difference between a good and an evil action; all would be attributed to selfishness." He was about to add: "This visit is a kindness that I did not expect, and one which I certainly did not deserve;" but to speak these words would necessitate an apology for the rudeness he felt he was guilty of in his last letter, and the fact that he knew that Father O'Grady had come to talk to him about Nora increased his nervousness. But their talk continued in commonplace and it seemed impossible to lift it out of the rut. Father O'Grady complimented Father Oliver on his house and Oliver answered that it was Peter Conway that built it, and while praising its comfort, he enlarged on the improvements that had been made in the houses occupied by priests.

"Yes, indeed," Father O'Grady answered, "the average Irish priest lived in my time in a cottage not far removed from those the peasants lived in. All the same, there was many a fine scholar among them. Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Catullus, Cicero in the bookcases. Do you ever turn to these books? Do you like reading Latin?"

And Father Oliver replied that sometimes he took down his Virgil. "I look into them all sometimes," he added.

"And you still read Latin, classical Latin, easily?" Father O'Grady inquired.

"Fairly," Father Oliver replied; "I read without turning to the dictionary, though I often come to words I have never seen or have forgotten the meaning of. I read on. The Latin poets are more useful than the English to me."

"More useful?" Father O'Grady repeated.

"More useful," Father Oliver rejoined, "if your object is a new point of view, and one wants that sometimes, living alone in the silent country. One sometimes feels frightened sitting by the fire all alone listening to the wind. I said just now that I was thinking of you. I often think of you, Father O'Grady, and envy you your busy parish. If I ever find myself in London I shall go for long tram drives, and however sordid the district I shall view the dim congregation of houses with pleasure and rejoice in the hub of the streets."

"You would soon weary of London, I promise you that, Father Oliver."

"A promise for which it would be an affectation to thank you," Father Oliver answered. And Father O'Grady spoke of the miles and miles of docks.

"The great murky Thames," he said, "wearies, but it is very wonderful. Ah, Landor's 'Hellenics' in the original Latin: how did that book come here?"

"A question I've often asked myself," Father Oliver returned. "A most intellectual volume it is to find in the house of an Irish priest. Books travel, and my predecessor, Father Peter, is the last man in the world who would have cared to spend an hour on anything so literary as Landor. He used to read the newspaper—all the newspapers he could get hold of."

Father Peter's personality did not detain them long, and feeling somewhat ashamed of their inability to talk naturally, without thinking of what they were to say

next, Father O'Grady ventured to doubt if Horace would approve of Landor's Latin and of the works written in comparatively modern times. Buchanan, for instance. At last the conversation became so trite and wearisome that Father O'Grady began to feel unable to continue it any longer.

"You've a nice garden, Father Oliver."

"You'd like to see my garden?" Father Oliver asked, very much relieved at having escaped from Buchanan so easily. And the two priests went out, each hoping that the other would break the ice; and to encourage Father Oliver to break it, Father O'Grady mentioned that he was going back that evening to Tinnick—a remark that was intended to remind Father Oliver that the time was passing by. Father Oliver knew that the time for speaking of her was passing by, but he could not bring himself to speak, and instead he tried to persuade Father O'Grady to stay to dinner, but he could not be persuaded; and they walked to and fro, talking about their different parishes, Father O'Grady asking Father Oliver questions about his school and his church. And when Father O'Grady had contributed a great deal of unnecessary information, he questioned Father O'Grady about his parish, and gained much information regarding the difficulties that a Catholic priest met with in London, till religion became as wearisome as the Latin language. At last it suddenly struck Father Oliver that if he allowed the talk to continue regarding the difficulties of the Catholic priest in London, Father O'Grady might speak of girls that had been driven out of Ireland by the priests, to become prostitutes in London. A talk on this subject would be too painful, and to escape from it he spoke of the beauty of the trees about the garden and the flowers in the garden, calling Father O'Grady's attention to the chrysanthemums, and, not willing to be outdone in horticulture, the London priest began to talk about the Japanese mal-

low in his garden, Father Oliver listening indifferently, saying, when it came to him to make a remark, that the time had come to put in the bulbs.

"Miss Glynn was very fond of flowers," he said suddenly, "and she helped me with my garden; it was she who told me to plant roses in that corner, and to cover the wall with rambling robin. Was it not a very pretty idea to cover that end of the garden with rambling roses?"

"It was indeed. She is a woman of great taste in music and in many other things. She must have regretted your garden."

"Why do you think she regretted my garden?" Father Oliver asked.

"Because she always regretted that mine wasn't larger. She helped me with my garden;" and feeling that they had at last got into a conversation that was full of interest for them both, Father Oliver said:

"Shall we go into the house? We shall be able to talk more agreeably by the fireside."

"I should like to get back to that turf fire; for it is the last that I shall probably see. Let us get back to it."

"I'm quite agreeable to return to the fire. Catherine will bring in the tea presently."

And as soon as they were back in the parlour, Father Oliver said:

"Father O'Grady, that is your chair. It was very good of you to take the trouble to drive over."

"I wished to make my correspondent's acquaintance," Father O'Grady murmured; "and there is much that it is difficult to put down on paper without creating a wrong impression, whereas in talk one is present to rectify any mistakes one may drop into. I am thinking now of the last subject dealt with in our correspondence, that I should have informed myself regarding Mr. Poole's

writing before I consented to allow Nora Glynn to accept the post of secretary."

"You must forgive me, Father O'Grady," Father Oliver cried.

"There is nothing to forgive, Father Oliver; but this criticism surprised me, for you have known Miss Nora Glynn longer than I have, and it seems strange that you should have forgotten already her steadfastness. Nothing that I could have said would have availed, and it seems to me that you were mistaken in asking me to urge Miss Glynn to decline the chance of improving her circumstances. I could not compel Miss Glynn even if I had wished to compel her. But we have discussed that question; let it pass."

"All the same," Father Oliver interjected, "if one sees a woman going into danger, surely one may warn her. A word of warning dropped casually is sometimes effective."

"But it is fatal to insist," Father O'Grady remarked; "and one should not try to bar the way—that is my experience at least."

"Well, your experiences are longer than mine, Father O'Grady, I submit. The mistake I made will certainly not be repeated. But since hearing from you I've heard from Miss Glynn, and the remarks she makes in her letters about Mr. Poole's literary work, unless indeed he be a Catholic, alarm me."

"Biblical criticism is not a Catholic characteristic," Father O'Grady answered. "So Miss Glynn has written to you?"

"Yes, but nothing definite about Mr. Poole's work—nothing definite. Do you know anything, Father O'Grady, about this man's writing? What is his reputation in the literary world?"

"I've heard a great deal about him," Father O'Grady answered. "I've made inquiries and have read some of

Mr. Poole's books, and have seen them reviewed in the newspapers; I've heard his opinions discussed, and his opinions are anti-Christian, inasmuch as he denies the divinity of our Lord."

"Could anybody be more anti-Christian than that?" Father Oliver asked.

"Yes, very much more," Father O'Grady replied. "There have always been people, and their number is increasing, who say that Christianity is not only untruthful but, what is worse, a great evil, having set men one against the other, creating wars innumerable. Millions have owed their deaths to tortures they have received because they differed regarding some trifling passage in Scripture. There can be no doubt of that, but it is equally true that Christianity has enabled many more millions to live as much from a practical point of view as from a spiritual. If Christianity had not been a necessity it would not have triumphed;" and Father O'Grady continued to speak of Mr. Poole's historical accounts of the history of the rise and influence of Christianity till Father Oliver interrupted him, crying out:

"And it is with that man her life will henceforth be passed, reading the books he reads and writes, and, what is worse, listening to his insidious conversation, to his subtle sophistries, for, no doubt, he is an eloquent and agreeable talker."

"You think, then," Father O'Grady said, "that a Christian forfeits his faith if he inquires?"

"No, if I thought that I should cease to be a Christian. She is not inquiring the matter out of her own account; she is an enforced listener, and hears only one side. Every day a plausible account is being poured into her ears, and her circumstances are such as would tempt her to give a willing ear to Mr. Poole's beliefs that God has not revealed his existence, and that we are free to live as we please, nature being our only guide. I cannot imag-

ine a young woman living in a more dangerous atmosphere than this.

"All you tell me, Father O'Grady, frightens me. I discovered my suspicions to you in my letters, but I can express myself better in talking than on paper—far better. It is only now that I realize how wrongly I acted towards this young woman. I was frightened in a measure before, but the reality of my guilt has never appeared so distinctly to me till now. You have revealed it to me, and I'm thinking now of what account I could give to God were I to die to-morrow. 'Thou hast caused a soul to be lost,' he would say. 'The sins of the flesh are transitory like the flesh, the sins of the faith are deeper,' may be God's judgment. Father O'Grady, I'm frightened, frightened; my fear is great, and at this moment I feel like a man on his deathbed. My agony is worse, for I'm in good health and can see clearly, whereas the dying man understands little. The senses numb as death approaches."

"Have you spoken of the mistake you made in confession, Father Oliver?"

"No, why should I?" he answered, "for none here would understand me. But I'll confess to you. You may have been sent to hear me. Who knows? Who can say?" and he dropped on his knees crying: "Can I be forgiven if that soul be lost to God? Tell me if such a sin can be forgiven?"

"We must not fall into the sin of despair," Father O'Grady answered. And he murmured the Latin formula *Absolve te,* etc., making the sign of the cross over the head of his penitent. For a while after the priests knelt together in prayer, and it was with a feeling that his burden had been lifted from him that Father Oliver rose from his knees, and, subdued in body and mind, stood looking through the room, conscious of the green grass showing through his window, lighted by a last ray of

the setting sun. It was the wanness of this light that put the thought into his mind that it would soon be time to send round to the stables for his visitor's car. His visitor! That small, frail man sitting in his armchair would soon be gone, carrying with him this, Father Oliver's, confession. What had he confessed? Already he had forgotten, and both men stood face to face thinking of words wherewith they might break the silence.

"I do not know," Father O'Grady said, "that I altogether share your fear that an anti-Christian atmosphere necessarily implies that the Catholic who comes into it will lose her faith, else faith would not be a pure gift from God. God doesn't overload his creatures unbearably, nor does he put any stress upon them from which they cannot extricate themselves. I could cite many instances of men and women whose faith has been strengthened by hostile criticism; the very arguments that have been urged against their faith have forced them to discover other arguments, and in this way they have been strengthened in their Catholic convictions." And to Father Oliver's question if he discerned any other influence except an intellectual influence in Mr. Poole, he answered that he had not considered this side of the question.

"I don't know what manner of man he is in his body," said Father Oliver, "but his mind is more dangerous. An intellectual influence is always more dangerous than a sensual influence, and the sins of faith are worse than the sins of the flesh. I never thought of him as a possible seducer. But there may be that danger too. I still think, Father O'Grady, that you might have warned Nora of her danger. Forgive me; I'm sure you did all that was necessary. You do forgive me?"

The men's eyes met, and Father O'Grady said, as if he wished to change the subject:

"You were born at Tinnick, were you not?"

"Yes, I was born in Tinnick," Father Oliver repeated mechanically, almost as if he had not heard the question.

"And your sisters are nuns?"

"Yes, yes."

"Tell me how it all came about."

"How all what came about?" Father Oliver asked, for he was a little dazed and troubled in his mind, and was, therefore, easily led to relate the story of the shop in Tinnick, his very early religious enthusiasms, and how he remembered himself always as a pious lad. On looking into the years gone by, he said that he saw himself more often than not by his bedside rapt in innocent little prayers. And afterwards at school he had been considered a pious lad. He rambled on, telling his story almost unconsciously, getting more thoughtful as he advanced into it, relating carefully the absurd episode of the hermitage in which, to emulate the piety of the old time, he chose Castle Island as a suitable spot for him to live in.

Father O'Grady listened, seriously moved by the story; and Father Oliver continued it, telling how Eliza, coming to see the priest in him, gave up her room to him as soon as their cousin the Bishop was consulted. And it was at this point of the narrative that Father O'Grady put a question.

"Was no attempt," he asked, "made to marry you to some girl with a big fortune?"

And Father Oliver told of his liking for Annie McGrath and of his aversion for marriage, acquiescing that aversion might be too strong a word; indifference would more truthfully represent him.

"I wasn't interested in Annie McGrath nor in any woman as far as I can remember until this unfortunate conduct of mine awakened an interest in Nora Glynn. And it would be strange, indeed, if it hadn't awakened an interest in me," he muttered to himself. Father O'Grady suppressed the words that rose up in his mind,

"Now I'm beginning to understand." And Father Oliver continued, like one talking to himself: "I'm thinking that I was singularly free from all temptations of the sensual life, especially those represented by womankind. I was ordained early, when I was twenty-two, and as soon as I began to hear confessions, the things that surprised me the most were the stories relating to those passionate attachments that men experience for women and women for men—attachments which sometimes are so intense that if the sufferer cannot obtain relief by the acquiescence of the object of their affections, he, if it be he, she, if it be she, cannot refrain from suicide. There have been cases of men and women going mad because their love was not reciprocated, and I used to listen to these stories wonderingly, unable to understand, bored by the relation."

If Father Oliver had looked up at that moment, Father O'Grady's eyes would have told him that he had revealed himself, and that perhaps Father O'Grady now knew more about him than he knew himself. But without withdrawing his eyes from the fire he continued talking till Catherine's step was heard outside.

"She's coming to lay the cloth for our tea," Father Oliver said. And Father O'Grady answered:

"I shall be glad of a cup of tea."

"Must you really go after tea?" Father Oliver asked; and again he begged Father O'Grady to stay for dinner. But Father O'Grady, as if he felt that the object of his visit had been accomplished, spoke of the drive back to Tinnick and of the convenience of the branch line of railway. It was a convenience certainly, but it was also an inconvenience, owing to the fact that the trains run from Tinnick sometimes missed the mail train; and this led Father Oliver to speak of the work he was striving to accomplish, the roofing of Kilronan Abbey, and many

other things, and the time passed without their feeling it till the car came round to take Father O'Grady away.

"He goes as a dream goes," Father Oliver said, and a few minutes afterwards he was sitting alone by his turf fire, asking himself in what dreams differed from reality. For like a dream Father O'Grady had come and he had gone, never to return. "But does anything return?" he asked himself, and he looked round his room, wondering why the chairs and tables did not speak to him, and why life was not different from what it was. He could hear Catherine at work in the kitchen preparing his dinner, she would bring it to him as she had done yesterday, he would eat it, he would sit up smoking his pipe for a while, and about eleven o'clock go to his bed. He would lie down in it, and rise and say Mass and see his parishioners. All these things he had done many times before, and he would go on doing them till the day of his death—"Until the day of my death," he repeated, "never seeing her again, never seeing him. Why did he come here?" And he was surprised that he could find no answer to any of the questions that he put to himself.

CHAP. VIII.

"NOTHING will happen again in my life—nothing of any interest. This is the end! And if I did go to London, of what should I speak to him? It will be better to try to forget it all, and return, if I can, to the man I was before I knew her;" and he stood stock still, thinking that without this memory he would not be himself.

Father O'Grady's coming had been a pleasure to him, for they had talked together; he had confessed to him; had been shriven. At that moment he caught sight of a newspaper upon his table. "*Illustrated England,*" he

muttered, his thoughts half away; and he fell to wondering how it had come into the house. "Father O'Grady must have left it," he said, and began to unroll the paper. But while unrolling it he stopped. Half his mind was still away, and he sat for fully ten minutes lost in sad sensations, and it was the newspaper slipping from his hand that awoke him. The first thing that caught his eye on opening the paper was an interview with Mr. Walter Poole, embellished with many photographs of Beechwood Hall.

"Did O'Grady leave this paper here for me to read," he asked himself, "or did he forget to take it away with him? We talked of so many things that he may have forgotten it, forgotten even to mention it. How very strange!"

The lodge gates and the long drive, winding between different woods, ascending gradually to the hilltop on which Beechwood Hall was placed by an early eighteenth-century architect, seemed to the priest to be described with too much unction by the representative of *Illustrated England*. To the journalist Beechwood Hall stood on its hill, a sign and symbol of the spacious leisure of the eighteenth century and the long tradition that it represented, one that had not even begun to drop into decadence till 1850, a tradition that still existed, despite the fact that democracy was finding its way into the agricultural parts of England. The journalist was impressed, perhaps unduly impressed, by the noble hall and the quiet passages that seemed to preserve a memory of the many generations that had passed through them on different errands, now all hushed in the family vault.

Father Oliver looked down the column rapidly, and it was not until the footman who admitted the journalist was dismissed by the butler, who himself conducted the journalist to the library, that Father Oliver said: "We have at last arrived at the castle of learning in which the

great Mr. Poole sits sharpening the pen which is to slay Christianity. But Christianity will escape Mr. Poole's pen. It has outlived many such attacks in the past. We shall see, however, what kind of nib he uses, fine or blunt?" The journalist followed the butler down the long library overlooking green sward to a quiet nook, if he might venture to speak of Mr. Walter Poole's study as a quiet nook. It seemed to surprise him that Mr. Walter Poole should rise from his writing-table and come forward to meet him, and he expressed his gratitude to Mr. Walter Poole, whose time was of great importance, for receiving him. And after all this unction came a flattering description of Mr. Walter Poole himself.

He was, in the interviewer's words, a young man, tall and clean-shaven, with a high nose which goes well with an eye-glass. The chin is long and drops straight; his hair is mustard-coloured and glossy, and it curls very prettily about the broad, well-shapen forehead. He is reserved at first, and this lends a charm to the promise, which is very soon granted you, of making the acquaintance with the thoughts and ideas which have interested Mr. Walter Poole since boyhood—in fine, which have given him his character. If he seems at first sight to conceal himself from you, it is from shyness, or because he is reluctant to throw open his mind to the casual curious. Why should he not keep his mind for his own enjoyment and for the enjoyment of his friends, treating it like his pleasure grounds or park? His books are not written for the many but for the few, and he does not desire a larger audience than those with whom he is in natural communion from the first, and this without any faintest appearance of affectation.

"I suppose it isn't fair," the priest said, "to judge a man through his interviewer; but if this interviewer doesn't misrepresent Mr. Walter Poole, Mr. Walter Poole is what is commonly known as a very superior person.

He would appear from this paper," the priest said, "to be a man between thirty and forty, not many years older than myself." The priest's thoughts floated away back into the past, and, returning suddenly with a little start to the present, he continued reading the interview, learning from it that Mr. Walter Poole's conversation was usually gentle, like a quiet river, and very often, like a quiet river, it rushed rapidly when Mr. Walter Poole became interested in his subject.

"How very superior all this is," the priest said. "The river of thought in him," the interviewer continued, "is deep or shallow, according to the need of the moment. If, for instance, Mr. Walter Poole is asked if he be altogether sure that it is wise to disturb people in their belief in the traditions and symbols that have held sway for centuries, he will answer quickly that if truth lies behind the symbols and traditions, it will be in the interest of the symbols and traditions to inquire out the truth, for blind belief—in other words, faith—is hardly a merit, or if it be a merit it is a merit that cannot be denied to the savages who adore idols. But the civilized man is interested in his history, and the Bible deserves scientific recognition, for it has a history certainly and is a history. 'We are justified, therefore,' Mr. Walter Poole pleaded, 'in seeking out the facts, and the search is conducted as much in the interests of theology as of science; for though history owes nothing to theology, it cannot be denied that theology owes a great deal to history.'"

"He must have thought himself very clever when he made that remark to the interviewer," the priest muttered; and he walked up and down his room, thinking of Nora Glynn living in this unchristian atmosphere.

He picked up the paper again and continued reading, for he would have to write to Nora about Father O'Grady's visit and about the interview in *Illustrated England.*

The interviewer inquired if Mr. Walter Poole was returning to Palestine, and Mr. Walter Poole replied that there were many places that he would like to revisit, Galilee, for instance, a country that St. Paul never seemed to have visited, which, to say the least, was strange. Whereupon a long talk began about Paul and Jesus, Mr. Walter Poole maintaining that Paul's teaching was identical with that of Jesus, and that Peter was a clown despised by Paul and Jesus.

"How very superior," Father Oliver muttered—"how very superior.". He read that Mr. Walter Poole was convinced that the three Synoptic Gospels were written towards the close of the first century; and one of the reasons he gave for this attribution was as in Matthew, chapter xxvii., verse 7, "And they took counsel, and bought with them (the thirty pieces of silver) the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day"—a passage which showed that the Gospel could not have been written till fifty or sixty years after the death of Jesus.

"England must be falling into atheism if newspapers dare to print such interviews," Father Oliver said; and he threw the paper aside angrily. "And it was I," he continued, dropping into his armchair, "that drove her into this atheistical country. I am responsible, I alone."

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
August 10, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I have a piece of news for you. Father O'Grady has been here, and left me a few hours ago. Catherine threw open the door, saying, 'Father O'Grady, your reverence,' and the small, frail man whom you know so well walked into the room, surprising me, who was

altogether taken aback by the unexpectedness of his visit.

"He was the last person in the world I expected at that moment to meet, yet it was natural that an Irish priest, on the mission in England, would like to spend his holidays in Ireland, and still more natural that, finding himself in Ireland, Father O'Grady should come to see me. He drove over from Tinnick, and we talked about you. He did not seem on the whole as anxious for your spiritual safety as I am, which is only what one might expect, for it was not he that drove you out of a Catholic country into a Protestant one. He tried to allay my fears, saying that I must not let remorse of conscience get hold of me, and he encouraged me to believe that my responsibility had long ago ended. It was pleasant to hear these things said, and I believed him in a way; but he left by accident or design a copy of *Illustrated England* on my table. I am sufficiently broad-minded to believe that it is better to be a good Protestant than a bad Catholic; but Mr. Walter Poole is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but an agnostic, which is only a polite word for an atheist. Week in and week out you will hear every argument that may be used against our holy religion. It is true that you have the advantage of being born a Catholic, and were well instructed in your religion; and no doubt you will accept with caution his statements, particularly that very insidious statement that Jesus lays no claim to divinity in the three Synoptic Gospels, and that these were not written by the apostles themselves, but by Greeks sixty, seventy, or perhaps eighty years after his death. I do not say he will try to undermine your faith, but how can he do otherwise if he believe in what he writes? However careful he may be to avoid blasphemy in your presence, the fact remains that you are living in an essentially unchristian atmosphere, and little by little the poison which you are taking

in will accumulate, and you will find that you have been influenced without knowing when or how.

"If you lose your faith, I am responsible for it; and I am not exaggerating when I say the thought that I may have lost a soul to God is always before me. I can imagine no greater responsibility than this, and there seems to be no way of escaping from it. Father O'Grady says that you have passed out of our care, that all we can do is to pray for you. But I would like to do something more, and if you happen upon some passages in the books you are reading that seem in contradiction to the doctrines taught by the Catholic Church, I hope you will not conclude that the Church is without an answer. The Church has an answer ready for every single thing that may be said against her doctrines. I am not qualified to undertake the defence of the Church against anyone. I quite recognize my own deficiency in this matter, but even I may be able to explain away some doubts that may arise. If so, I beg of you not to hesitate to write to me. If I cannot do so myself, I may be able to put you in the way of finding out the best Catholic opinion on matters of doctrine.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Oliver Gogarty."

From Miss Nora Glynn to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"Beechwood Hall,
Berkshire,
"*August* 15, 19—.

"I am sorry indeed that I am causing you so much trouble of conscience. You must try to put it out of your mind that you are responsible for me. The idea is too absurd. When I was in your parish I was interested in you, and that was why I tried to improve the choir and took trouble to decorate the altar. Have

you forgotten how anxious I was that you should write the history of the lake and its castles? Why don't you write it and send it to me? I shall be interested in it, though for the moment I have hardly time to think of anything but Jewish history. Within the next few weeks, for certain, the last chapter of Mr. Poole's book will be passed for press, and then we shall go abroad and shall visit all the great men in Europe. Some are in Amsterdam, some are in Paris, some live in Switzerland. I wish I understood French a little better. Isn't it all like a dream? Do you know, I can hardly believe I ever was in forlorn Garranard teaching little barefooted children their Catechism and their A, B, C.

"Good-bye, Father Gogarty. We go abroad next week. I lie awake thinking of this trip—the places I shall see and the people I shall meet.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Nora Glynn."

It seemed to him that her letter gave very little idea of her. Some can express themselves on paper, and are more real in the words they write than in the words they speak. But hardly anything of his idea of her transpired in that letter—only in her desire of new ideas and new people. She was interested in everything—in his projected book about the raiders faring forth from the island castles, and now in the source of the Christian River; and he began to meditate a destructive criticism of Mr. Poole's ideas in a letter addressed to the editor of *Illustrated England,* losing heart suddenly, he knew not why, feeling the task to be beyond him. Perhaps it would be better not to write to Nora again.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*August* 22, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I gather from your letter that religion has ceased to interest you, except as a subject for argument, and I will not begin to argue with you, but will put instead a simple question to you: In what faith do you intend to bring up your child? and what will be your answer when your child asks: 'Who made me?' Mr. Poole may be a learned man, but all the learning in the world will not tell you what answer to make to your child's questions; only the Church can do that.

"I have thought a great deal about the danger that your post of secretary to Mr. Poole involves and am not sure that the state of indifference is not the worst state of all. One day you will find that indifference has passed into unbelief, and you will write to me (if we continue to write to each other) in such a way that I shall understand that you have come to regard our holy religion as a tale fit only for childhood's ears. I write this to you, because I have been suddenly impelled to write, and it seems to me that in writing to you in this simple way I am doing better than if I spent hours in argument. You will not always think as you do now; the world will not always interest you as much as it does now. I will say no more on this point but will break off abruptly to tell you that I think you are right when you say that we all want change. I feel I have lived too long by the side of this lake, and I am thinking of going to London. . . ."

The room darkened gradually, and, going to the window, he longed for something to break the silence, and was glad when the rain pattered among the leaves. The

trees stood stark against the sky, in a green that seemed unnatural. The sheep moved as if in fear towards the sycamores, and from all sides came the lowing of cattle. A flash drove him back from the window. He thought he was blinded. The thunder rattled; it was as if a God had taken the mountains in his arms and was shaking them together. Crash followed crash; the rain came down; it was as if the rivers of heaven had been opened suddenly. Once he thought the storm was over; but the thunder crashed again, the rain began to thicken; there was another flash and another crash, and the pour began again. But all the while the storm was wearing itself out, and he began to wonder if a sullen day, ending in this apocalypse, would pass into a cheerful evening. It seemed as if it would, for some blue was showing between the clouds drifting westward, threatening every moment to blot out the blue, but the clouds continued to brighten at the edges. "The beginning of the sunset," the priest said; and he went out on his lawn and stood watching the swallows in the shining air, their dipping, swerving flight showing against a background of dappled clouds. He had never known so extraordinary a change; and he walked to and fro in the freshened air, thinking that Nora's health might not have withstood the strain of trudging from street to street, teaching the piano at two shillings an hour, returning home late at night to a poky little lodging, eating any food a landlady might choose to give her. As a music teacher she would have had great difficulty in supporting herself and her baby, and it pleased him to imagine the child as very like her mother; and returning to the house, he added this paragraph:

"I was interrupted while writing this letter by a sudden darkening of the light, and when I went to the window the sky seemed to have sunk close to the earth, and there was a dreadful silence underneath it. I was

driven back by a flash of lightning and the thunder was terrifying. A most extraordinary storm lasting for no more than an hour, if that, and then dispersing into a fine evening. It was a pleasure to see the change—the lake shrouded in mist, with ducks talking softly in the reeds, and swallows high up, advancing in groups like dancers on a background of dappled clouds.

"I have come back to my letter to ask if you would like me to go to see your baby? Father O'Grady and I will go together if I go to London, and I will write to you about it. You will be glad, no doubt, to hear that the child is going on well.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Oliver Gogarty."

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,

"*September* 4, 19—.

"Forgive me, my dear friend, but I am compelled to write to apologize for the introduction of my troubles of conscience and my anxiety for your spiritual welfare into my last letter. You found a way out of difficulties—difficulties into which I plunged you. But we will say no more on that point: enough has been said. You have created a life for yourself. You have shown yourself to be a strong woman in more ways than one, and are entitled to judge whether your work and the ideas you live among are likely to prove prejudicial to your faith and morals. By a virtue of forgiveness which I admire and thank you for, you write telling me of the literary work you are engaged upon. If I had thought before writing the letter I am now apologizing for, I could not have failed to see that you write to me because you would relieve my loneliness as far as you are able. But I did not think: I yielded to my mood, and see now

that my letters are disgracefully egotistical, and very often absurd; for have I not begged of you to remember that since God will hold me responsible for your soul, it would be well that you should live a life of virtue and renunciation, so that I shall be saved the humiliation of looking down from above upon you in hell?

"Loneliness begets sleeplessness, and sleeplessness begets a sort of madness. I suffer from nightmare, and I cannot find words to tell you how terrible are the visions one sees at dawn. It is not so much that one sees unpleasant and ugly things—life is not always pretty or agreeable, that we know—but when one lies between sleeping and waking, life itself is shown in mean aspects, and it is whispered that one has been duped till now; that now, and for the first time, one knows the truth. You remember how the wind wails about the hilltop on which I live. The wailing of wind has something to do with my condition of mind; one cannot sit from eight o'clock in the evening till twelve at night staring at the lamp, hearing the wind, and remain perfectly sane.

"But why am I writing about myself? I want to escape from myself, and your letters enable me to do so. The names of the cities you are going to visit transport me in imagination, and last night I sat a long while wondering why I could not summon courage to go abroad. Something holds me back. I think if I once left Garranard, I should never return to the lake and its island. I hope you haven't forgotten Marban, the hermit who lived at the end of the lake in Church Island. I visited his island yesterday. I should have liked to have rowed myself through the strait and along the shores, seeing Castle Carra and Castle Burke as I passed; but Church Island is nearly eight miles from here, and I don't know if I should have been man enough to pull the fisherman's boat so far, so I put the grey horse into the shafts and went round by road.

"Church Island lies in a bay under a rocky shore, and the farmer who cuts the grass there in the summer-time has a boat to bring away the hay. It was delightful to step into it, and as the oars chimed I said to myself, 'I have Marban's poem in my pocket—and will read it walking up the little path leading from his cell to his church.' The lake was like a sheet of blue glass, and the island lay yellow and red in it. As we rowed, seeking a landing-place under the tall trees that grow along the shores, the smell of autumn leaves mingled with the freshness of the water. We rowed up a beautiful little inlet overhung with bushes. The quay is at the end of it, and on getting out of the boat, I asked the boatman to point out to me what remained of Marban's Church. He led me across the island—a large one, the largest in the lake—not less than seven acres or nine, and no doubt some parts of it were once cultivated by Marban. Of his church, however, very little remains—only one piece of wall, and we had great difficulty in seeing it, for it is now surrounded by a dense thicket. The little pathway leading from his cell to the church still exists; it is almost the same as he left it—a little overgrown, that is all.

"Marban was no ordinary hermit; he was a sympathetic naturalist, a true poet, and his brother who came to see him, and whose visit gave rise to the colloquy, was a king. I hope I am not wronging Marban, but the island is so beautiful that I cannot but think that he was attracted by its beauty and went there because he loved Nature as well as God. His poem is full of charming observations of nature, of birds and beasts and trees, and it proves how very false the belief is that primitive man had no eyes to see the beauties of the forest and felt no interest in the habits of animals or of birds, but regarded them merely as food. It pleases me to think of the hermit sitting under the walls of his church or by

his cell writing the poem which has given me so much pleasure, including in it all the little lives that came to visit him—the birds and the beasts—enumerating them as carefully as Wordsworth would, and loving them as tenderly. Marban! Could one find a more beautiful name for a hermit? Guaire is the brother's name. Marban and King Guaire. Now, imagine the two brothers meeting for a poetic disputation regarding the value of life, and each speaking from his different point of view! True that Guaire's point of view is only just indicated—he listens to his brother, for a hermit's view of life is more his own than a king's. It pleases me to think that the day the twain met to discourse of life and its mission was the counterpart of the day I spent on the island. My day was full of drifting cloud and sunshine, and the lake lay like a mirror reflecting the red shadow of the island. So you will understand that the reasons Marban gave for living there in preference to living the life of the world seemed valid, and I could not help peering into the bushes, trying to find a rowan-tree—for he speaks of one. The rowan is the mountain-ash. I found several. One tree was covered with red berries, and I broke off a branch and brought it home, thinking that perchance it might have come down to us from one planted by Marban's hand. Of blackthorns there are plenty. The adjective he uses is 'dusky.' Could he have chosen a more appropriate one? I thought, too, of 'the clutch of eggs, the honey and the mast' that God sent him, of 'the sweet apples and red whortleberries,' and of his dish of 'strawberries of good taste and colour.'

"It is hard to give in an English translation an idea of the richness of the verse, heavily rhymed and winningly alliterated, but you will see that he enumerates the natural objects with skill. The eternal summer—the same in his day as in ours—he speaks of as 'a coloured mantle,' and he mentions 'the fragrance of the woods.'

And seeing the crisp leaves—for the summer was waning—I repeated his phrase, 'the summer's coloured mantle,' and remembered:

> 'Swarms of bees and chafers, the little musicians
> of the world—
> A gentle chorus.'

'The wren,' he says, 'is an active songster among the hazel boughs. Beautifully hooded birds, woodpeckers, fair white birds, herons, sea-gulls, come to visit me.' There is no mournful music in his island; and as for loneliness, there is no such thing in

> 'My lowly little abode, hidden in a mane of green-barked
> yew-tree.
> Near is an apple-tree,
> Big like a hostel;
> A pretty bush thick as a fist of hazel-nuts, a choice
> spring and water fit for a Prince to drink.
> Round it tame swine lie down,
> Wild swine, grazing deer,
> A badger's brood,
> A peaceful troop, a heavy host of denizens of the soil
> A-trysting at my house.
> To meet them foxes come.
> How delightful!'

"The island is about a hundred yards from the shore, and I wondered how the animals crossed from the mainland as I sat under the porch of the ruined church. I suppose the water was shallower than it is now. But why and how the foxes came to meet the wild swine is a matter of little moment; suffice it that he lived in this island aware of its loneliness, 'without the din of strife, grateful to the Prince who giveth every good to me in my bower.' To which Guaire answered:

> 'I would give glorious kingship
> With my share of our father's heritage,—
> To the hour of my death let me forfeit it,
> So that I may be in thy company, O Marban.'

"There are many such beautiful poems in early Irish. I know of another, and I'll send it to you one of these

days. In it is a monk who tells how he and his cat sit together, himself puzzling out some literary or historical problem, the cat thinking of hunting mice, and how the catching of each is difficult and requires much patience.

"Ireland attained certainly to a high degree of civilization in the seventh and eighth centuries, and if the Danes had not come, Ireland might have anticipated Italy. The poems I have in mind are the first written in Europe since classical times, and though Italy and France be searched, none will be found to match them.

"I write these things to you because I wish you to remember that, when religion is represented as hard and austere, it is the fault of those who administer religion, and not of religion itself. Religion in Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries was clearly a homely thing, full of tender joy and hope, and the inspiration not only of poems, but of many churches and much ornament of all kinds, illuminated missals, carven porches. If Ireland had been left to herself—if it had not been for the invasion of the Danes, and the still worse invasion of the English—there is no saying what high place she might not have taken in the history of the world. But I am afraid the halcyon light that paused and passed on in those centuries will never return. We have gotten the after-glow, and the past should incite us; and I am much obliged to you for reminding me that the history of the lake and its castles would make a book. I will try to write this book, and while writing will look forward to the day when I shall send you a copy of the work, if God gives me strength and patience to complete it. Little is ever completed in Ireland. . . . But I mustn't begin to doubt before I begin the work, and while you and Mr. Poole are studying dry texts, trying to prove that the things that men have believed and loved for centuries are false, I shall be engaged

in writing a sympathetic history—the history of natural things and natural love.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Oliver Gogarty."

From Miss Nora Glynn to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"Antwerp,

"*September* 3, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"You are a very human person after all, and it was very kind of you to think about my baby and kind of you to write to me about her. My baby is a little girl, and she has reddish hair like mine, and if ever you see her I think you will see me in her. The address of the woman who is looking after her is Mrs. Cust, 25, Henry Street, Guildford. Do go to see her and write me a long letter, telling me what you think of her. I am sure a trip to London will do you a great deal of good. Pack up your portmanteau, Father Gogarty, and go to London at once. Promise me that you will, and write to me about your impressions of London and Father O'Grady, and when you are tired of London come abroad. We are going on to Munich, that is all I know, but I will write again.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Nora Glynn."

Father Oliver sat wondering, and then, waking up suddenly, he went about his business, asking himself if she really meant all she said, for why should she wish him to go abroad, for his health or in the hope of meeting him—where? In Munich!

"A riddle, a riddle, which"—he reflected a moment—"which my experience of life is not sufficient to solve."

On his way to Derrinrush he was met by a man hurry-

ing towards him. "Sure it is I that am in luck this day, meeting your reverence on the road, for we shall be spared half a mile if you have the sacred elements about you." So much the peasant blurted out between the gasps, and when his breath came easier the priest learnt that Catherine, the man's wife, was dying. "Me brother's run for the doctor, but I, being the speedier, came for yourself, and if your reverence has the sacred elements about you, we'll go along together by a short cut over the hill." "I'm afraid I have not got the oil and there's nothing for it but to go back to the house." "Then I'm afeard that Catherine will be too late to get the Sacrament. But she is a good woman, sorra better, and maybe don't need the oil," which indeed proved to be a fact, for when they reached the cabin they found the doctor there before them, who, rising from his chair by the bedside, said, "The woman is out of danger, if she ever was in any." "All the same," cried the peasant, "Catherine wouldn't refuse the Sacrament." "But if she be in no danger, of what use would the Sacrament be to her?" the doctor asked; the peasant answering, "Faith, you must have been a Protestant before you were a Catholic to be talking like that," and Father Oliver hesitated, and left the cabin sorrowed by the unseemliness of the wrangle. He was not, however, many yards down the road when the dispute regarding the efficacy of the Sacrament administered out of due time was wiped out by a memory of something Nora had told him of herself: she had announced to the monitresses, who were discussing their ambitions, that hers was to be the secretary of a man of letters. "So it would seem that she had an instinct of her destiny from the beginning, just as I had of mine. But had I? Her path took an odd turn round by Garranard. But she has reached her goal, or nearly. The end may be marriage—with whom? Poole most likely. Be that as it may, she will pass on

to middle age; we shall grow older and seas and continents will divide our graves. Why did she come to Garranard?"

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"*September* 10, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I received your letter this morning, written from Antwerp, and it has set me thinking that Mr. Poole's interests in scholarship must have procured for him many acquaintances among Dutch scholars, men with whom he has been in correspondence. You will meet them and hear them pour their vast erudition across dinner-tables. Rubens's great picture, 'The Descent from the Cross,' is in Antwerp; you will go to see it, and in Munich Mr. Poole will treat you to the works of Wagner and Mozart. You are very happy; everything has gone well with you, and it would ill befit me, who brought so much unhappiness upon you, to complain that you are too happy, too much intent on the things of this world. Yet, if you will allow me to speak candidly, I will tell you what I really think. You are changing; the woman I once knew hardly corresponds with the woman who writes to me. In reading the letters of the English Nora, I perceive many traces here and there of the Irish Nora, for the Irish Nora was not without a sense of duty, of kindness towards others, but the English Nora seems bent upon a life of pleasure, intellectual and worldly adventures. She delights in foreign travel, and no doubt places feelings above ideas, and regards our instincts as our sovereign guides. Now, when we find ourselves delighting to this extent in the visible, we may be sure that our lives have wandered far away from spiritual things. There is ever a divorce between the world of sense and the world of spirit, and the question of how much love we may expend

upon external things will always arise, and will always be a cause of perplexity to those who do not choose to abandon themselves to the general drift of sensual life. This question is as difficult as the cognate question of what are our duties toward ourselves and our duties toward others. And your letters raise all these questions. I ponder them in my walks by the lake in the afternoon. In the evening in my house on the hilltop I sit thinking, seeing in imagination the country where I have been born and where I have always lived—the lake winding in and out of headlands, the highroad shaded by sycamores at one spot, a little further on wandering like a grey thread among barren lands, with here and there a village; and I make application of all the suggestions your letters contain to my own case. Every house in Garranard I know, and I see each gable end and each doorway as I sit thinking, and all the faces of my parishioners. I see lights springing up far and near. Wherever there is a light there is a poor family.

"Upon these people I am dependent for my daily bread, and they are dependent upon me for spiritual consolation. I baptize them, I marry them, and I bury them. How they think of me, I know not. I suppose they hardly think at all. When they return home at night they have little time for thinking; their bodies are too fatigued with the labour of the fields. But as I sit thinking of them, I regret to say that my fear often is that I shall never see any human beings but them; and I dream of long rambles in the French country, resting at towns, reading in libraries. A voice whispers, 'You could do very well with a little of her life, but you will never know any other life but your present one.' A great bitterness comes up, a little madness gathers behind the eyes; I walk about the room and then I sit down, stunned by the sudden conviction that life is, after all, a very squalid thing—something that I would like to kick like an old hat down a road.

"The conflict going on within me goes on within every man, but without this conflict life would be superficial; we shouldn't know the deeper life. Duty has its rewards as well as its pain, and the knowledge that I am passing through a time of probationship sustains me. I know I shall come out of it all a stronger man.

"Oliver Gogarty."

After posting his letter he walked home, congratulating himself that he had made it plain to her that he was not a man she could dupe. Her letter was written plainly, and the more he thought of her letter the clearer did it seem that it was inspired by Poole. But what could Poole's reason be for wishing him to leave Ireland, to go abroad? It was certain that if Poole were in love with Nora he would do all in his power to keep a poor priest (was it thus they spoke of him?) in Ireland. Poole might wish to make a fool of him, but what was her reason for advising him to go abroad? Revenge was too strong a word.

In the course of the evening it suddenly struck him that, after all, she might have written her letter with a view of inducing him to come to Rome. She was so capricious that it was not impossible that she had written quite sincerely, and wished him out there with her. She was so many-sided, and he fell to thinking of her character, without being able to arrive at any clear estimate of it, with this result, however—that he could not drive out the belief that she had written him an insincere letter. Or did she wish to revenge herself? The thought brought him to his feet, for he could never forget how deeply he had wronged her—it was through his fault that she had become Mr. Poole's secretary—maybe his mistress. If he had not preached that sermon, she would be teaching the choir in his parish. But, good heavens! what use was there in going over all that again? He walked to the

window and stood there watching the still autumn weather —a dull leaden sky, without a ray of light upon the grass, or a wind in the trees—thinking that these grey days deprived him of all courage. And then he remembered suddenly how a villager's horse coming from market had tripped and fallen by the roadside. Would that he, too, might fall by the roadside, so weary was he. "If I could only make known my suffering, she would take pity on me; but no one knows another's suffering." He walked from his window sighing, and a moment after stopped in front of his writing-table. Perhaps it was the writing-table that put the thought into his mind that she might like to read a description of an Irish autumn.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
September.

"You know the wind is hardly ever at rest about the hilltop on which my house stands. Even in summer the wind sighs, a long, gentle little sigh, sometimes not unpleasant to hear. You used to speak of an Æolian harp, and say that I should place one on my window-sill. A doleful instrument it must be—a loud wailing sound in winter-time, and in the summer a little sigh. But in these autumn days an Æolian harp would be mute. There is not wind enough to-day on the hillside to cause the faintest vibration. Yesterday I went for a long walk in the woods, and I can find no words that would convey an idea of the stillness. It is easy to speak of a tomb, but it was more than that. The dead are dead, and somnambulism is more mysterious than death. The season seemed to stand on the edge of a precipice, will-less, like a sleep-walker. Now and then the sound of a falling leaf caught my ear, and I shall always remember how a crow, flying high overhead towards the mountains, uttered an ominous

'caw'; another crow answered, and there was silence again. The branches dropped, and the leaves hung out at the end of long stems. One could not help pitying the trees, though one knew one's pity was vain.

"As I wandered in Derrinrush, I came suddenly upon some blood-red beech-trees, and the hollow was full of blood-red leaves. You have been to Derrinrush: you know how mystic and melancholy the wood is, full of hazels and Druid stones. After wandering a long while I turned into a path. It led me to a rough western shore, and in front of me stood a great Scotch fir. The trunk has divided, and the two crowns showed against the leaden sky. It has two birch-trees on either side, and their graceful stems and faint foliage, pale like gold, made me think of dancers with sequins in their hair and sleeves. There seemed to be nothing but silence in the wood, silence, and leaves ready to fall. I had not spoken to anyone for a fortnight—I mean I had no conversation with anyone—and my loneliness helped me to perceive the loneliness of the wood, and the absence of birds made me feel it. The lake is never without gulls, but I didn't see one yesterday. 'The swallows are gone,' I said; 'the wild geese will soon be here,' and I remembered their doleful cry as I scrambled under some blackthorn bushes, glad to get out of the wood into the fields. Though I knew the field I was in well, I didn't remember the young sycamores growing in one corner of it. Yesterday I could not but notice them, for they seemed to be like children dying of consumption in a hospital ward—girls of twelve or thirteen. You will think the comparison far-fetched and unhealthy, one that could only come out of a morbidly excited imagination. Well, I cannot help that; like you, I must write as I feel.

"Suddenly I heard the sound of an axe, and I can find no words to tell you how impressive its sound was in the still autumn day. 'How soon will the tree fall?' I thought; and, desirous of seeing it fall, I walked on,

guided by the sound, till I saw at the end of the glade—whom do you think? Do you remember an old man called Patsy Murphy? He had once been a very good carpenter, and had made and saved money. But he is now ninety-five, and I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw him trying to cut down a larch. What his object could be in felling the tree I could not tell, and, feeling some curiosity, I walked forward. He continued to chip away pieces of the bark till his strength failed him, and he had to sit down to rest. Seeing me, he took off his hat—you know the tall hat he wears—a hat given him twenty or thirty years ago by whom? Patsy Murphy's mind is beginning to wander. He tells stories as long as you will listen to him, and it appears now that his daughter-in-law turned him out of his house—the house he had built himself, and that he had lived in for half a century. This, however, is not the greatest wrong she had done him. He could forgive her this wrong, but he cannot forgive her stealing of his sword. 'There never was a Murphy,' he said, 'who hadn't a sword.' Whether this sword is an imagination of Patsy's fading brain, I cannot say; perhaps he had some old sword and lost it. The tale he tells to-day differs wholly from the tale he told yesterday and the tale he will tell to-morrow. He told me once he had been obliged to give up all his savings to his son. I went to interview the son, determined to sift the matter to the bottom, and discovered that Patsy had still one hundred and twenty pounds in the bank. Ten pounds had been taken out for —I needn't trouble you with further details. Sufficient has been said to enable you to understand how affecting it was to meet this old man in the red and yellow woods, at the end of a breathless autumn day, trying to fell a young larch. He talked so rapidly, and one story flowed so easily into another, that it was a long time before I could get in a word. At last I was able to get out of him that the Colonel had given him leave to build a house on

the shore, where he would be out of everybody's way. 'All my old friends are gone, the Colonel's father and his mother. God be merciful to her! she was a good woman, the very best. And all I want now is time to think of them that's gone. . . . Didn't I know the Colonel's grandfather and his grandmother? They're all buried in the cemetery yonder in Kiltoon, and on a fine evenin' I do like to be sittin' on a stone by the lake, thinking of them all.'

"It was at once touching and impressive to see this old man, weak as a child, the only trembling thing in a moveless day, telling these wanderings of an almost insane brain. You will say, 'But what matter? They may not be true in fact, but they are his truth, they are himself, they are his age.' His ninety-five years are represented in his confused talk, half recollection, half complaints about the present. He knew my father and mother, too, and, peering into my face, he caught sight of a grey hair, and I heard him mutter:

"'Ah! they grow grey quicker now than they used to.'

"As I walked home in the darkening light, I bethought myself of the few years left to me to live, though I am still a young man, that in a few years, which would pass like a dream, I should be as frail as Patsy Murphy, who is ninety-five. 'Why should I not live as long?' I asked myself, losing my teeth one by one and my wits."

"*September.*

"I was interrupted in my description of the melancholy season, and I don't know how I should have finished that letter if I had not been interrupted. The truth is that the season was but a pretext. I did not dare to write asking you to forgive me for having returned your letter. I do not do so now. I will merely say that I returned the letter because it annoyed me, and, shameful as the admission

may be, I admit that I returned it because I wished to annoy you. ' I said to myself, ' If this be so—if, in return for kind thought—— Why shouldn't she suffer? I suffer.' One isn't—one cannot be—held responsible for every base thought that enters the mind. How long the mind shall entertain a thought before responsibility is incurred I am not ready to say. One's mood changes. A storm gathers, rages for a while, and disperses; but the traces of the storm remain after the storm has passed away. I am thinking now that perhaps, after all, you were sincere when you asked me to leave Garranard and take my holiday in Rome, and the baseness of which for a moment I deemed you capable was the creation of my own soul. I don't mean that my mind, my soul, is always base. At times we are more or less unworthy. Our tempers are part of ourselves? I have been pondering this question lately. Which self is the true self—the peaceful or the choleric? My wretched temper aggravated my disappointment, and my failure to write the history of the lake and its castles no doubt contributed to produce the nervous depression from which I am suffering. But this is not all; it seems to me that I may point out that your—I hardly know what word to use: ' irrelevancy ' does not express my meaning; ' inconsequences ' is nearer, yet it isn't the word I want—well, your inconsequences perplex and distract my thoughts. If you will look through the letter you sent me last you will find that you have written many things that might annoy a man living in the conditions in which I live. You follow the current of your mood, but the transitions you omit, and the reader is left hopelessly conjecturing. . . ."

She seemed so strange, so inconclusive. There seemed to be at least two, if not three, different women in the letters she had written to him, and he sat wondering how

a woman with cheeks like hers, and a voice like hers, and laughter like hers, could take an interest in such arid studies. Her very name, Nora Glynn, seemed so unlike the woman who would accompany Mr. Poole into National Libraries, and sit by him surrounded by learned tomes. Moreover a mistress does not read Hebrew in a National Library with her paramour. But what did he know about such women? He had heard of them supping in fashionable restaurants covered with diamonds, and he thought of them with painted faces and dyed hair, and he was sure that Nora did not dye her hair or paint her face. No, she was not Poole's mistress. It was only his ignorance of life that could have led him to think of anything so absurd. . . . And then, weary of thinking and debating with himself, he took down a book that was lent some months ago, a monograph on a learned woman, a learned philosophical writer and translator of exegetical works from the German. Like Nora, she came from the middle classes, and, like Nora, she transgressed, how often he did not know, but with another woman's husband certainly. A critical writer and exponent of serious literature. Taste for learned studies did not preclude abstinence from those sins which in his ignorance of life he had associated with worldlings! Of course, St. Augustine was such a one. But is a man's truth also woman's truth? Apparently it is, and if he could believe the book he had been reading, Nora might very well be Poole's mistress. Therewith the question came up again, demanding answer: Why did she write declining any correspondence with him, and three weeks afterwards write another letter inveigling him, tempting him, bringing him to this last pitch of unhappiness? Was the letter he returned to her prompted by Mr. Poole and by a spirit of revenge? Three days after he took up his pen and added this paragraph to his unfinished letter:

"I laid aside my pen, fearing I should ask what are your relations with Mr. Poole. I have tried to keep myself from putting this question to you, but the torture of doubt overcomes me, and even if you should never write to me again, I must ask it. Remember that I am responsible to God for the life you lead. Had it not been for me, you would never have known Poole. You must grant to every man his point of view, and, as a Christian, I cannot put my responsibility out of mind. If you lose your soul, I am responsible for it. Should you write that your relations with Mr. Poole are not innocent, I shall not be relieved of my responsibility, but it will be a relief to me to know the truth. I shall pray for you, and you will repent your sins if you are living in sin. Forgive me the question I am putting to you. I have no right to do so whatever. Whatever right I had over you when you were in my parish has passed from me. I exceeded that right, but that is the old story. Maybe I am repeating my very fault again. It is not unlikely, for what do we do all through our lives but to repeat ourselves? You have forgiven me, and, having forgiven me once, maybe you will forgive me again. However this may be, do not delay writing, for every day will be an agony till I hear from you. At the end of an autumn day, when the dusk is sinking into the room, one lacks courage to live. Religion seems to desert one, and I am thinking of the leaves falling, falling in Derrinrush. All night long they will be falling, like my hopes. Forgive me this miserable letter. But if I didn't write it, I should not be able to get through the evening. Write to me. A letter from Italy will cheer me and help me to live. All my letters are not like this one. Not very long ago I wrote to you about a hermit who never wearied of life, though he lived upon an island in this lake. Did you receive that letter? I wonder. It is still following you about maybe. It was a pleasant letter, and I should be sorry if you did not get it.

Write to me about Italy—about sunshine, about statues and pictures.

"Ever sincerely yours,
"Oliver Gogarty."

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*October* 20, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I wrote last week apologizing for troubling you again with a letter, pleading that the melancholy of autumn and the falling of the leaf forced me to write to someone. I wrote asking for a letter, saying that a letter about Italian sunshine would help me to live. I am afraid my letter must have seemed exaggerated. One writes out of a mood. The mood passes, but when it is with one, one is the victim of it. And this letter is written to say I have recovered somewhat from my depression of spirits. . . . I have found consolation in a book, and I feel that I must send it to you, for even you may one day feel depressed and lonely. Did you ever read 'The Imitation of Christ'? There is no book more soothing to the spirit than it; and on the very first page I found some lines which apply marvellously well to your case:

"'If thou didst know the whole Bible outwardly, and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without charity and the grace of God?'

"Over the page the saint says: 'Every man naturally desireth to know; but what doth knowledge avail without the fear of God?'

"'Truly, a lowly rustic that serveth God is better than a proud philosopher who pondereth the course of the stars and neglecteth himself.'

"'He that knoweth himself becometh vile to himself, and taketh no delight in the praises of men.'

"'If I knew all things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what would it profit me in the sight of God, who will judge according to deeds?'

"'Cease from overweening desire of knowledge, because many distractions are found there, and much delusion.'

"I might go on quoting till I reached the end, for on every page I note something that I would have you read. But why quote when I can send you the book? You have lost interest in the sentimental side of religion, but your loss is only momentary. You will never find anyone who will understand you better than this book. You are engaged now in the vain pursuit of knowledge, but some day, when you are weary of knowledge, you will turn to it. I do not ask you read it now, but promise me that you will keep it. It will be a great consolation to me to know that it is by you.

"Very sincerely yours,
"Oliver Gogarty, P.P."

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*November* 3, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I sent you—I think it must be a fortnight ago—a copy of 'The Imitation of Christ.' The copy I sent is one of the original Elizabethan edition, a somewhat rare book and difficult to obtain. I sent you this copy in order to make sure that you would keep it; the English is better than the English of our modern translations. You must not think that I feel hurt because you did not write to thank me at once for having sent you the book. My reason for writing is merely because I should like to know if it reached you. If you have not received it, I think it would be better to make inquiries at once in the post. It

would be a pity that a copy of the original Elizabethan edition should be lost. Just write a little short note saying that you have received it.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Oliver Gogarty, P.P."

CHAP. IX.

"THE IMITATION" dropped on his knees, and he wondered if the spiritual impulse it had awakened in him was exhausted, or if the continual splashing of the rain on the pane had got upon his nerves.

"But it isn't raining in Italy," he said, getting up from his chair; "and I am weary of the rain, of myself—I am weary of everything." And going to the window, he tried to take an interest in the weather, asking himself if it would clear up about 3 o'clock. It cleared usually late in the afternoon for a short while, and he would be able to go out for half an hour. But where should he go? He foresaw his walk from end to end before he began it: the descent of the hill, the cart-track and the old ruts full of water, the dead reeds on the shore soaking, the dripping trees. But he knew that about 3 o'clock the clouds would lift, and the sunset begin in the gaps in the mountains. He might go as far as the little fields between Derrinrush and the plantations, and from there he could watch the sunset. But the sunset would soon be over, and he would have to return home, for a long evening without a book. Terrible! And he began to feel that he must have an occupation—his book! To write the story of the island castles would pass the time, and wondering how he might write it, whether from oral tradition or from the books and manuscripts which he might find in national libraries, he went out about 3 o'clock and wandered down the old cart-track, getting his feet very wet, till he came to the

pine-wood, into which he went, and stood looking across the lake, wondering if he should go out to Castle Island in a boat—there was no boat, but he might borrow one somewhere—and examine what remained of the castle. But he knew every heap of old stones, every brown bush, and the thick ivy that twined round the last corner wall. Castle Hag had an interest Castle Island had not. The cormorants roosted there; and they must be hungry, for the lake had been too windy for fishing this long while. A great gust whirled past, and he stood watching the clouds drifting overhead—the same thick vapour drifting and going out. For nearly a month he was waiting for a space of blue sky, and a great sadness fell upon him, a sick longing for a change; but if he yielded to this longing he would never return to Garranard. There seemed to be no way out of the difficulty—at least, he could see none.

A last ray lit up a distant hillside, his shadow floated on the wet sand. The evening darkened rapidly, and he walked in a vague diffused light, inexpressibly sad to find Moran waiting for him at the end of an old cart-track, where the hawthorns grew out of a tumbled wall. He would keep Moran for supper. Moran was a human being, and——

"I've come to see you, Gogarty; I don't know if I'm welcome."

"It's joking you are. You'll stay and have some supper with me?"

"Indeed I will, if you give me some drink, for it's drink that I'm after, and not eating. I'd better get the truth out at once and have done with it. I've felt the craving coming on me for the last few days—you know what I mean—and now it's got me by the throat. I must have drink. Come along, Gogarty, and give me some, and then I'll say good-bye to you for ever."

"Now what are you saying?"

"Don't stand arguing with me, for you can't understand, Gogarty—no one can; I can't myself. But it doesn't matter what anybody understands—I'm done for."

"We'll have a bit of supper together. It will pass from you."

"Ah, you little know;" and the priests walked up the hill in silence.

"Gogarty, there's no use talking; I'm done for. Let me go."

"Come in, will you?" and he took him by the arm. "Come in. I'm a bigger man than you, Moran; come in!"

"I'm done for," Father Moran said again.

Father Oliver made a sign of silence, and when they were in the parlour, and the door shut behind them, he said:

"You mustn't talk like that, and Catherine within a step of you."

"I've told you, Gogarty, I'm done for, and I've just come here to bid you good-bye; but before we part I'd like to hear you say that I haven't been wanting in my duties—that in all the rest, as far as you know, I've been as good a man as another."

"In all but one thing I know no better man, and I'll not hear that there's no hope."

"Better waste no time talking. Just let me hear you say again that I've been a good man in everything but one thing."

"Yes, indeed;" and the priests grasped hands.

And Catherine came into the room to ask if Father Moran was stopping to supper. Father Oliver answered hurriedly: "Yes, yes, he's staying. Bring in supper as soon as you can"; and she went away, to come back soon after with the cloth. And while she laid it the priests sat looking at each other, not daring to speak, hoping that Catherine did not suspect from their silence and manner that anything was wrong. She seemed to be a long while

laying the cloth and bringing in the food; it seemed to them as if she was delaying on purpose. At last the door was closed, and they were alone.

"Now, Moran, sit down and eat a bit, won't you?"

"I can't eat anything. Give me some whisky; that is what I want. Give me some whisky, and I will go away and you'll never see me again. Just a glass to keep me going, and I will go straight out of your parish, so that none of the disgrace will fall upon you; or—what do you think? You could put me up here; no one need know I'm here. All I want are a few bottles of whisky."

"You mean that I should put you up here and let you get drunk?"

"You know what I mean well enough. I'm like that. And it's well for you who don't want whisky. But if it hadn't been for whisky I should have been in a mad-house long ago. Now, just tell me if you'll give me drink. If you will, I'll stay and talk with you, for I know you're lonely; if not, I'll just be off with myself."

"Moran, you'll be better when you've had something to eat. It will pass from you. I will give you a glass of beer."

"A glass of beer! Ah, if I could tell you the truth! We've all our troubles, Gogarty—trouble that none knows but God. I haven't been watching you—I've been too tormented about myself to think much of anyone else—but now and then I've caught sight of a thought passing across your mind. We all suffer, you like another, and when the ache becomes too great to be borne we drink. Whisky is the remedy; there's none better. We drink and forget, and that is the great thing. There are times, Gogarty, when one doesn't want to think, when one's afraid, aren't there?—when one wants to forget that one's alive. You've had that feeling, Gogarty. We all have it. And now I must be off. I must forget everything. I

want to drink and to feel the miles passing under my feet."

And on that he got up from the fire.

"Come, Moran, I won't hear you speak like that."

"Let me go. It's no use; I'm done for;" and Father Oliver saw his eyes light up.

"I'll not keep you against your will, but I'll go a piece of the road with you."

"I'd sooner you didn't come, Gogarty."

Without answering, Father Oliver caught up his hat and followed Father Moran out of the house. They walked without speaking, and when they got to the gate Father Oliver began to wonder which way his unhappy curate would choose for escape. "Now why does he take the southern road?" And a moment after he guessed that Moran was making for Michael Garvey's public-house, "and after drinking there," he said to himself, "he'll go on to Tinnick." After a couple of miles, however, Moran turned into a by-road leading through the mountains, and they walked on without saying a word.

And they walked mile after mile through the worn mountain road.

"You've come far enough, Gogarty; go back. Regan's public-house is outside of your parish."

"If it's outside my parish, it's only the other side of the boundary; and you said, Moran, that you wouldn't touch whisky till to-morrow morning."

The priests walked on again, and Father Oliver fell to thinking now what might be the end of this adventure. He could see there was no hope of persuading Father Moran from the bottle of whisky.

"What time do you be making it, Gogarty?"

"It isn't ten o'clock yet."

"Then I'll walk up and down till the stroke of twelve. . . . I'll keep my promise to you."

"But they'll all be in bed by twelve. What will you do then?"

Father Moran didn't give Father Gogarty an answer, but started off again, and this time he was walking very fast; and when they got as far as Regan's public-house Father Oliver took his friend by the arm, reminding him again of his promise.

"You promised not to disgrace the parish."

"I said that. . . . Well, if it's walking your heart is set upon, you shall have your bellyful of it."

And he was off again like a man walking for a wager. But Father Oliver, who wouldn't be outwalked, kept pace with him, and they went striding along, walking without speaking.

Full of ruts and broken stones, the road straggled through the hills, and Father Oliver wondered what would happen when they got to the top of the hill. For the sea lay beyond the hill. The road bent round a shoulder of the hill, and when Father Oliver saw the long road before him his heart began to fail him, and a cry of despair rose to his lips; but at that moment Moran stopped.

"You've saved me, Gogarty."

He did not notice that Father Gogarty was breathless, almost fainting, and he began talking hurriedly, telling Father Oliver how he had committed himself to the resolution of breaking into a run as soon as they got to the top of the hill.

"My throat was on fire then, but now all the fire is out of it; your prayer has been answered. But what's the matter, Gogarty? You're not speaking."

"What you say is wonderful indeed, Moran, for I was praying for you. I prayed as long as I had breath; one can't pray without breath or speak. We'll talk of this presently."

The priests turned back, walking very slowly.

"I feel no more wish to drink whisky than I do to drink

bog-water. But I'm a bit hot, and I think I'd like a drink, and a drink of water will do me first-rate. Now look here, Gogarty: a miracle has happened, and we should thank God for it. Shall we kneel down? "

The road was very wet, and they thought it would do as well if they leant over the little wall and said some prayers together.

" I've conquered the devil; I know it. But I've been through a terrible time, Gogarty. It's all lifted from me now. I'm sorry I've brought you out for such a walk as this."

" Never mind the walk, Moran, so long as the temptation has passed from you—that's the principal thing."

To speak of ordinary things was impossible, for they believed in the miracle, and, thanking God for this act of grace, they walked on until they reached Father Oliver's gate.

" I believe you're right, Moran; I believe that a miracle has happened. You'll go home straight, won't you? "

Father Moran grasped Father Oliver's hand.

" Indeed I will."

And Father Oliver stood by his gate looking down the road, and he didn't open it and go through until Father Moran had passed out of sight. Pushing it open, he walked up the gravel path, saying to himself, " A miracle, without doubt. Moran called it a miracle and it seems like one, but will it last? Moran believes himself cured, that is certain "; and Father Oliver thought how his curate had gripped his hand, and felt sure that the grip meant, " You've done me a great service, one I can never repay."

It was a pleasure to think that Moran would always think well of him. " Yes, Moran will always think well of me," he repeated as he groped his way into the dark and lonely house in search of a box of matches. When his lamp was lighted he threw himself into his armchair

so that he might ponder better on what had happened. "I've been a good friend to him, and it's a great support to a man to think that he's been a good friend to another, that he kept him in the straight path, saved him from himself. Saved him from himself," he repeated; "can anybody be saved from himself?" and he began to wonder if Moran would conquer in the end and take pride in his conquest over himself.

There was no sound, only an occasional spit of the lamp, and in the silence Father Oliver asked if it were the end of man's life to trample upon self or to encourage self. "Nora," he said, "would answer that self is all we have, and to destroy it and put in its place conventions and prejudices is to put man's work above God's. But Nora would not answer in these words till she had spoken with Mr. Walter Poole." The name brought a tightening about his heart, and when Father Oliver stumbled to his feet—he had walked many miles, and was tired—he began to think he must tell Nora of the miracle that had happened about a mile—he thought it was just a mile—beyond Patsy Regan's public-house. The miracle would impress her, and he looked round the room. It was then he caught sight of a letter—her letter. The envelope and foreign stamp told him that before he read the address—her writing! His hand trembled and his cheek paled, for she was telling him the very things he had longed to know. She was in love with Poole! she was not only in love with him—she was his mistress!

The room seemed to tumble about him, and he grasped the end of the chimney-piece. And then, feeling that he must get out into the open air, he thought of Moran. He began to feel he must speak to him. He couldn't remember exactly what he had to say to him, but there was something on his mind which he must speak to Moran about. It seemed to him that he must go away with Moran to some public-house far away and drink. Hadn't Moran

said that there were times when we all wanted drink? He tried to collect his thoughts. . . . Something had gone wrong, but he couldn't remember what had gone wrong or where he was. It seemed to him that somebody had lost her soul. He must seek it. It was his duty. Being a priest, he must go forth and find the soul, and bring it back to God. He remembered no more until he found himself in the midst of a great wood, standing in an open space; about him were dripping trees, and a ghostly sky overhead, and no sound but that of falling leaves. Large leaves floated down, and each interested him till it reached the wet earth.

And then he began to wonder why he was in the wood at night, and why he should be waiting there, looking at the glimmering sky, seeing the oak-leaves falling, remembering suddenly that he was looking for her soul, for her lost soul, and that something had told him he would find the soul he was seeking in the wood; so he was drawn from glade to glade through the underwoods, and through places so thickly overgrown that it seemed impossible to pass through. And then the thorn-bushes gave way before him, for he was no longer alone. She had descended from the trees into his arms, white and cold, and every moment the wood grew dimmer; but when he expected it to disappear, when he thought he was going to escape for ever with her, an opening in the trees discovered the lake, and in fear he turned back into the wood, seeking out paths where there was little light.

Once he was within the wood, the mist seemed to incorporate again; she descended again into his arms, and this time he would have lifted the veil and looked into her face, but she seemed to forbid him to recognize her under penalty of loss. His desire overcame him, and he put out his hand to lift the veil. As he did so his eyes opened, he saw the wet wood, the shining sky, and she sitting by a stone waiting for him. A little later she came to meet

him from behind the hawthorns that grew along the cart-track—a tall woman with a little bend in her walk.

He wondered why he was so foolish as to disobey her, and besought her to return to him, and they roamed again in the paths that led round the rocks overgrown with briars, by the great oak-tree where the leaves were falling. And wandering they went, smiling gently on each other, till she began to tell him that he must abide by the shores of the lake—why, he could not understand, for the wood was much more beautiful, and he was more alone with her in the wood than by the lake.

The sympathy was so complete that words were not needed, but they had begun in his ears. He strove to apprehend the dim words sounding in his ears. Not her words, surely, for there was a roughness in the voice, and presently he heard somebody asking him why he was about this time of night, and very slowly he began to understand that one of his parishioners was by him, asking him whither he was going.

"You'll be catching your death at this hour of the night, Father Oliver."

And the man told Father Oliver he was on his way to a fair, and for a short-cut he had come through the wood. And Father Oliver listened, thinking all the while that he must have been dreaming, for he could remember nothing.

"Now, your reverence, we're at your own door, and the door is open. When you went out you forgot to close it."

The priest didn't answer.

"I hope no harm will come to your reverence; and you'll be lucky if you haven't caught your death."

CHAP. X.

HE stopped in his undressing to ponder how Moran had come to tell him that he was going away on a drinking-bout, and all their long walk together to within a mile of Regan's public-house returned to him bit by bit, how Moran knelt down by the roadside to drink bog-water, which he said would take the thirst from him as well as whisky; and after bidding Moran good-night he had fallen into his armchair. It was not till he rose to his feet to go to bed that he had caught sight of the letter. Nora wrote —he could not remember exactly what she wrote, and threw himself into bed. After sleeping for many hours, his eyes at last opened, and he awoke wondering, asking himself where he was. Even the familiar room surprised him. And once more he began the process of picking his way back, but he couldn't recall what had happened from the time he left his house in search of Moran till he was overtaken by Alec in the wood. In some semi-conscious state he must have wandered off to Derrinrush. He must have wandered a long while—two hours, maybe more—through the familiar paths, but unaware that he was choosing them. To escape from the effort of remembrance he was glad to listen to Catherine, who was telling him that Alec was at the door, come up from the village to inquire how the priest was.

She waited to hear Father Oliver's account of himself, but not having a story prepared, he pretended he was too tired to speak; and as he lay back in his chair he composed a little story, telling how he had been for a long walk with Father Moran, and, coming back in the dark, had missed his way on the outskirts of the wood. She began to raise some objections, but he said she was not to excite herself, and went out to see Alec, who, not being

a quick-witted fellow, was easily persuaded into an acceptance of a very modified version of the incident, and Father Oliver lay back in his chair wondering if he had succeeded in deceiving Catherine. It would seem that he had, for when she came to visit him again from her kitchen she spoke of something quite different, which surprised him, for she was a very observant woman of inexhaustible curiosity. But this time, however, he had managed to keep his secret from her, and, dismissing her, he thought of Nora's letter.

From Miss Nora Glynn to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"Rapallo, Italy,
December 12, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"I received 'The Imitation' to-day and your two letters, one asking me if I had got the book. We had left Munich without giving instructions about our letters, so please accept my apologies and my best thanks. The Elizabethan translation, as you point out, is beautiful English, and I am glad to have the book; it will remind me of you, and I will keep it by me even if I do not read it very often. I passed the book over to Mr. Poole; he read it for a few minutes, and then returned it to me. 'A worthy man, no doubt,' he said, 'but prone to taking things for granted. "The Imitation," ' he continued, 'reminds me of a flower growing in the shade of a cloister, dying for lack of sun, and this is surely not the right kind of reading for you or your friend Father Oliver.' I feel sure you want a change. Change of scene brings a change of mind. Why don't you come to Italy? Italy is the place for you. Italy is your proper mind. Mr. Poole says that Italy is every man's proper mind, and you're evidently thinking of Italy, for you ask for a description

of where I am staying, saying that a ray of Italian sunlight will cheer you. Come to Italy. You can come here without danger of meeting us. We are leaving at the end of the month.

"But I could go on chattering page after page, telling you about gardens and orange-trees (the orange-trees are the best part of the decoration; even now the great fruit hangs in the green leaves); and when I had described Italy, and you had described all the castles and the islands, we could turn back and discuss our religious differences. But I doubt if any good would come of this correspondence. You see, I have got my work to do, and you have got yours, and, notwithstanding all you say, I do not believe you to be unable to write the history of the lake and its castles. Your letters prove that you can, only your mind is unhinged by fears for my spiritual safety, and depressed by the Irish climate. It is very depressing, I know. I remember how you used to attribute the history of Ireland to the climate: a beautiful climate in a way, without extremes of heat and cold, as you said once, without an accent upon it. But you are not the ordinary Irishman; there is enough vitality in you to resist the languor of the climate. Your mood will pass away. . . . Your letter about the hermit that lived on Church Island is most beautiful. You have struck the right note—the wistful Irish note—and if you can write a book in that strain I am sure it will meet with great success. Go on with your book, and don't write to me any more—at least, not for the present. I have got too much to do, and cannot attend to a lengthy correspondence. We are going to Paris, and are looking forward to spending a great deal of time reading in the National Library. Some day we may meet, or take up this correspondence again. At present I feel that it is better for you and better for me that it should cease. But you will

not think hardly of me because I write you this. I am writing in your own interests, dear Father Gogarty.

"Very sincerely yours,

"Nora Glynn."

He read the letter slowly, pondering every sentence and every word, and when he had finished it his hand dropped upon his knee; and when the letter fell upon the hearthrug he did not stoop to pick it up, but sat looking into the fire, convinced that everything was over and done. There was nothing to look forward to; his life would drag on from day to day, from week to week, month to month, year to year, till at last he would be taken away to the grave. The grave is dreamless! But there might be a long time before he reached it, living for years without seeing or even hearing from her, for she would weary of writing to him. He began to dream of a hunt, the quarry hearing with dying ears the horns calling to each other in the distance, and cast in his chair, his arms hanging like dead arms, his senses mercifully benumbed, he lay, how long he knew not, but it must have been a long time.

Catherine came into the room with some spoons in her hands, and asked him what was the matter, and, jumping up, he answered her rudely, for her curiosity annoyed him. It was irritating to have to wait for her to leave the room, but he did not dare to begin thinking while she was there. The door closed at last; he was alone again, and his thoughts fixed themselves at once on the end of her letter, on the words, "Go on with your book, and don't write to me any more—at least, not for the present. I have too much to do, and cannot attend to a lengthy correspondence." The evident cruelty of her words surprised him. There was nothing like this in any of her other letters. She intended these words as a *coup de*

grâce. There was little mercy in them, for they left him living; he still lived—in a way.

There was no use trying to misunderstand her words. To do so would be foolish, even if it were possible for him to deceive himself, and the rest of her letter mattered nothing to him. The two little sentences with which she dismissed him were his sole concern; they were the keys to the whole of this correspondence which had beguiled him. Fool that he had been not to see it! Alas! we see only what we want to see. He wandered about the lake, trying to bring himself to hate her. He even stopped in his walks to address insulting words to her. Words of common abuse came to his tongue readily, but there was an unconquerable tenderness in his heart always; and one day the thought went by that it was nobler of her to make him suffer than to have meekly forgiven him, as many women would have done, because he was a priest. He stopped affrighted, and began to wonder if this were the first time her easy forgiveness of his mistake had seemed suspicious. No, he felt sure that some sort of shadow of disappointment had passed at the back of his mind when he read her first letter, and after having lain for months at the back of his mind, this idea had come to the surface. An extraordinary perversion, truly, which he could only account for by the fact that he had always looked upon her as being more like what the primitive woman must have been than anybody else in the world; and the first instinct of the primitive woman would be to revenge any slight on her sexual pride. He had misread her character, and in this new reading he found a temporary consolation.

As he sat thinking of her he heard a mouse gnawing under the boards, and every night after the mouse came to gnaw. "The teeth of regret are the same; my life is being gnawed away. Never shall I see her." It seemed impossible that life would close on him without his seeing

her face or hearing her voice again, and he began to think how it would be if they were to meet on the other side. For he believed in heaven, and that was a good thing. Without such belief there would be nothing for him to do but to go down to the lake and make an end of himself. But believing as he did in heaven and the holy Catholic Church to be the surest way of getting there, he had a great deal to be thankful for. Poole's possession of her was but temporary, a few years at most, whereas his possession of her, if he were so fortunate as to gain heaven, and by his prayers to bring her back to the true fold, would endure for ever and ever. The wisest thing, therefore, for him to do would be to enter a Trappist monastery. But our Lord says that in heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage, and what would heaven be to him without Nora? No more than a union of souls, and he wanted her body as well as her soul. He must pray. He knew the feeling well—a sort of mental giddiness, a delirium in the brain; and it increased rapidly, urging him to fall on his knees. If he resisted, it was because he was ashamed and feared to pray to God to reserve Nora for him. But the whirl in his brain soon deprived him of all power of resistance, and, looking round the room hurriedly to assure himself he was not watched, he fell on his knees and burst into extemporary prayer: *" O my God, whatever punishment there is to be borne, let me bear it. She sinned, no doubt, and her sins must be atoned for. Let me bear the punishment that thou, in thine infinite wisdom, must adjudge to her, poor sinful woman that she is, poor woman persecuted by men, persecuted by me. O my God, remember that I lent a willing ear to scandalmongers, that I went down that day to the school and lost my temper with her, that I spoke against her in my church. All the sins that have been committed are my sins; let me bear the punishment. O my Lord Jesus Christ, do thou intercede with thy Father*

and ask him to heap all the punishment on my head. Oh, dear Lord Jesus, if I had only thought of thee when I went down to the school, if I had remembered thy words, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone,' I should have been spared this anguish. If I had remembered thy words, she might have gone to Dublin and had her baby there, and come back to the parish. O my God, the fault is mine; all the faults that have been committed can be traced back to me, therefore I beseech of thee, I call upon thee, to let me bear all the punishment that she has earned by her sins, poor erring creature that she is. O my God, do this for me; remember that I served thee well for many years when I lived among the poor folk in the mountains. For all these years I ask this thing of thee, that thou wilt let me bear her punishment. Is it too much I am asking of thee, O my God, is it too much?"

When he rose from his knees, bells seemed to be ringing in his head, and he began to wonder if another miracle had befallen him, for it was as if someone had laid hands on him and forced him on his knees. But to ask the Almighty to extend his protection to him rather than to Mr. Poole, who was a Protestant, seemed not a little gross. Father Oliver experienced a shyness that he had never known before, and he hoped the Almighty would not be offended at the familiarity of the language, or the intimate nature of the request, for to ask for Nora's body as well as her soul did not seem altogether seemly.

It was queer to think like that. Perhaps his brain was giving way. And he pushed the plates aside; he could not eat any dinner, nor could he take any interest in his garden.

The dahlias were over, the chrysanthemums were beginning. Never had the country seemed so still: dead birds in the woods, and the sounds of leaves, and the fitful December sunlight on the strands—these were his distractions when he went out for a walk, and when he came

in he often thought it would be well if he did not live to see another day, so heavy did the days seem, so uneventful, and in these languid autumn days the desire to write to Nora crept nearer, until it always seemed about him like some familiar animal.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*December* 30, 19—.

"Dear Miss Glynn,

"I should have written to you before, but I lacked courage. Do you remember saying that the loneliness of the country sometimes forced you to kneel down to pray that you might die? I think the loneliness that overcame you was the loneliness that comes at the end of an autumn day when the dusk gathers in the room. It seems to steal all one's courage away, and one looks up from one's work in despair, asking of what value is one's life. The world goes on just the same, grinding our souls away. Nobody seems to care; nothing seems to make any difference.

"Human life is a very lonely thing, and for that it is perhaps religious. But there are days when religion fails us, when we lack courage, lonesomeness being our national failing. We were always lonesome, hundreds of years ago as much as to-day. You know it, you have been through it and will sympathize. A caged bird simply beats its wings and dies, but a human being does not die of loneliness, even when he prays for death. You have experienced it all, and will know what I feel when I tell you that I spend my time watching the rain, thinking of sunshine, picture-galleries, and libraries.

"But you were right to bid me go on with the book I spoke to you about. If I had gone away, as you first suggested, I should have been unhappy; I should have thought continually of the poor people I left behind; my

abandonment of them would have preyed on my mind, for the conviction is dead in me that I should have been able to return to them; we mayn't return to places where we have been unhappy. I might have been able to get a parish in England or a chaplaincy, but I should have always looked upon the desertion of my poor people as a moral delinquency. A quiet conscience is, after all, a great possession, and for the sake of a quiet conscience I will remain here, and you will be able to understand my scruple when you think how helpless my people are, and how essential is the kindly guidance of the priest.

"Without a leader, the people are helpless; they wander like sheep on a mountain-side, falling over rocks or dying amid snowdrifts. Sometimes the shepherd grows weary of watching, and the question comes, Has a man no duty towards himself? And then one begins to wonder what is one's duty and what is duty—if duty is something more than the opinions of others, something more than a convention which we would not like to hear called into question, because we feel instinctively that it is well for everyone to continue in the rut, for, after all, a rut means a road, and roads are necessary. If one lets one's self go on thinking, one very soon finds that wrong and right are indistinguishable, so perhaps it is better to follow the rut if one can. But the rut is beset with difficulties; there are big holes on either side. Sometimes the road ends nowhere, and one gets lost in spite of one's self. But why am I writing all these things to you?"

Why, indeed? If he were to send this letter she would show it to Mr. Poole, and they would laugh over it together. "Poor priesty!" they would say, and the paper was crumpled and thrown into the fire. "My life is unendurable, and it will grow worse," he said, and fell to thinking how he would grow old, getting every day more like an old stereotyped plate, the Mass and the rosary at the end of his tongue, and nothing in his heart. He

had seen many priests like this. Could he fall into such miserable decadence? Could such obedience to rule be any man's duty? But where should he go? It mattered little whither he went, for he would never see her any more, and she was, after all, the only real thing in the world for him.

So did he continue to suffer like an animal, mutely, instinctively, mourning his life away, forgetful of everything but his grief; unmindful of his food, and unable to sleep when he lay down, or to distinguish between familiar things—the birds about his house, the boys and girls he had baptized. Very often he had to think a moment before he knew which was Mary and which was Bridget, which was Patsy and which was Mike, and very often Catherine was in the parlour many minutes before he noticed her presence. She stood watching him, wondering of what he was thinking, for he sat in his chair, getting weaker and thinner; and soon he began to look haggard as an old man or one about to die. He seemed to grow feebler in mind; his attention wandered away every few minutes from the book he was reading. Catherine noticed the change, and, thinking that a little chat would be of help, she often came up from her kitchen to tell him the gossip of the parish; but he could not listen to her, her garrulousness seemed to him more than ever tiresome, and he kept a book by him, an old copy of "Ivanhoe," which he pretended he was reading when he heard her step.

Father Moran came to discuss the business of the parish with him and insisted on relieving Father Oliver of a great deal of it, saying that he wanted a rest, and he often urged Father Oliver to go away for a holiday. He was kind, but his talk was wearisome, and Father Oliver thought he would prefer to read about the fabulous Rowena than to hear any more about the Archbishop. But when Father Moran left Rowena bored him, and so

completely that he could not remember at what point he had left off reading, and his thoughts wandered from the tournament to some phrase he had made use of in writing to Nora, or, it might be, some phrase of hers that would suddenly spring into his mind. He sought no longer to discover her character from her letters, nor did he criticize the many contradictions which had perplexed him: it seemed to him that he accepted her now, as the phrase goes, "as she was," thinking of her as he might of some supernatural being whom he had offended, and who had revenged herself. Her wickedness became in his eyes an added grace, and from the rack on which he lay he admired his executioner. Even her liking for Mr. Poole became submerged in a tide of suffering, and of longing, and weakness of spirit. He no longer had any strength to question her liking for the minor prophets: there were discrepancies in everyone, and no doubt there were in him as well as in her. He had once been very different from what he was to-day. Once he was an ardent student in Maynooth, he had been an energetic curate; and now what was he? Worse still, what was he becoming? And he allowed his thoughts to dwell on the fact that every day she was receding from him. He, too, was receding. All things were receding—becoming dimmer.

He piled the grate up with turf, and when the blaze came leaned over it, warming his hands, asking himself why she liked Mr. Poole rather than him. For he no longer tried to conceal from himself the fact that he loved her. He had played the hypocrite long enough; he had spoken about her soul, but it was herself that he wanted. This admission brought some little relief, but he felt that the relief would only be temporary. Alas! it was surrender. It was worse than surrender—it was abandonment. He could sink no deeper. But he could; we can all sink deeper. Now what would the end be? There is an end to everything; there must be an end even to hu-

miliation, to self-abasement. It was Moran over again. Moran was ashamed of his vice, but he had to accept it, and Father Oliver thought how much it must have cost his curate to come to tell him that he wanted to lie drunk for some days in an outhouse in order to escape for a few days from the agony of living. "That is what he called it, and I, too, would escape from it."

His thoughts turned suddenly to a poem written by a peasant in County Cork a hundred years ago to a woman who inspired a passion that wrecked his mind altogether in the end. And he wondered if madness would be the end of his suffering, or if he would go down to the lake and find rest in it.

"Oh, succour me, dear one, give me a kiss from thy mouth,
And lift me up to thee from death,
Or bid them make for me a narrow bed, a coffin of boards,
In the dark neighbourhood of the worm and his friends.
My life is not life but death, my voice is no voice but a wind,
There is no colour in me, nor life, nor richness, nor health;
But in tears and sorrow and weakness, without music, without sport, without power,
I go into captivity and woe, and in the pain of my love of thee."

CHAP. XI.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*March* 12, 19—.

"A LONG time has passed without your hearing from me, and I am sure you must have said more than once: 'Well, that priest has more sense than I gave him credit for. He took the hint. He understood that it would be useless for us to continue to write long letters to each other about remorse of conscience and Mr. Poole's criticism of the Bible.' But the sight of my handwriting will call into question the opinion you have

formed of my good sense, and you will say: 'Here he is, beginning it all over again.' No, I am not. I am a little ashamed of my former letters, and am writing to tell you so. My letters, if I write any, will be quite different in the future, thanks to your candour. Your letter from Rapallo cured me; like a surgeon's knife, it took out the ulcer that was eating my life away. The expression will seem exaggerated, I know; but let it remain. You no doubt felt that I was in ignorance of my own state of feelings regarding you, and you wrote just such a letter as would force me to look into my heart and to discover who I really was. You felt that you could help me to some knowledge of myself by telling me about yourself.

"The shock on reading your confession—for I look upon your Rapallo letter as one—was very great, for on reading it I felt that a good deal that I had written to you about the salvation of your soul was inspired, not by any pure fear that I had done anything that might lose a soul to God, but by pure selfishness. I did not dare to write boldly that I loved yourself, and would always love you; I wore a mask and a disguise, and in order to come to terms with myself I feel it necessary to confess to you; otherwise all the suffering I have endured would be wasted.

"But this is not all my confession; worse still remains. I have discovered that when I spoke against you in church, and said things that caused you to leave the parish, I did not do so, as I thought, because I believed that the morality of my parish must be maintained at any cost. I know now that jealousy—yes, sensual jealousy—prompted me. And when I went to my sisters to ask them to appoint you to the post of music-teacher in their school, I did not do so for their sake, but for my own, because I wished to have you back in the parish. But I do not wish you to think

that when I wrote about atonement I wrote what I knew to be untrue. I did not; the truth was hidden from me. Nor did I wish to get you back to the parish in order that I might gratify my passion. All these things were very vague, and I didn't understand myself until now. I never had any experience of life till I met you. And is it not curious that one should know so little of one's self, for I might have gone down to my grave without knowing how false I was at heart, if I had not been stricken down with a great illness?

"One day, Catherine told me that the lake was frozen over, and, as I had been within doors a long while, she advised me to go out and see the boys sliding on the ice. Her advice put an idea into my head, that I might take out my skates and skate recklessly without trying to avoid the deeper portions where the ice was likely to be thin, for I was weary of life, and knowing that I could not go back upon the past, and that no one would ever love me, I wished to bring my suffering to an end. You will wonder why I did not think of the sufferings that I might have earned for myself in the next world. I had suffered so much that I could think of nothing but the present moment. God was good, and he saved me, for as I stood irresolute before a piece of ice which I knew wouldn't bear me, I felt a great sickness creeping over me. I returned home, and for several days the doctor could not say whether I would live or die. You remember Catherine, my servant? She told me that the only answer the doctor would give her was that if I were not better within a certain time there would be no hope of my recovery. At the end of the week he came into my room. Catherine was waiting outside, and I hear that she fell on her knees to thank God when the doctor said: 'Yes, he is a little better; if there's no relapse he'll live.'

"After a severe illness one is alone with one's self,

the whole of one's life sings in one's head like a song, and listening to it, I learned that it was jealousy that prompted me to speak against you, and not any real care for the morality of my parish. I discovered, too, that my moral ideas were not my own. They were borrowed from others, and badly assimilated. I remembered, too, how at Maynooth the tradition was always to despise women, and in order to convince myself I used to exaggerate this view, and say things that made my fellow-students look at me askance, if not with suspicion. But while dozing through long convalescent hours many things hitherto obscure to me became clear, and it seems now to me to be clearly wrong to withhold our sympathy from any side of life. It seems to me that it is only by our sympathy we can do any good at all. God gave us our human nature; we may misuse and degrade our nature, but we must never forget that it came originally from God.

"What I am saying may not be in accordance with current theology, but I am not thinking of theology, but of the things that were revealed to me during my sickness. It was through my fault that you met Mr. Walter Poole, and I must pray to God that he will bring you back to the fold. I shall pray for you both. I wish you all happiness, and I thank you for the many kind things you have said, for the good advice you have given me. You are quite right: I want a change. You advise me to go to Italy, and you are right to advise me to go there, for my heart yearns for Italy. But I dare not go; for I still feel that if I left my parish I should never return to it; and if I were to go away and not return a great scandal would be caused, and I am more than ever resolved not to do anything to grieve the poor people, who have been very good to me, and whose interests I have neglected this long while.

"I send this letter to Beechwood Hall, where you

will find it on your return. As I have already said, you need not answer it; no good will come by answering it. In years to come, perhaps, when we are both different, we may meet again.

"Oliver Gogarty."

From Miss Nora Glynn to Father Oliver Gogarty.

"Imperial Hotel, Cairo,
"Egypt,
"*May* 5, 19—.

"Dear Father Gogarty,

"By the address on the top of this sheet of paper you will see that I have travelled a long way since you last heard from me, and ever since your letter has been following me about from hotel to hotel. It is lucky that it has caught me up in Egypt, for we are going East to visit countries where the postal service has not yet been introduced. We leave here to-morrow. If your letter had been a day later it would have missed me; it would have remained here unclaimed—unless, indeed, we come back this way, which is not likely. You see what a near thing it was; and as I have much to say to you, I should be sorry not to have had an opportunity of writing.

"Your last letter put many thoughts into my head, and made me anxious to explain many things which I feel sure you do not know about my conduct since I left London, and the letters I have written to you. Has it not often seemed strange to you that we go through life without ever being able to reveal the soul that is in us? Is it because we are ashamed, or is it that we do not know ourselves? It is certainly a hard task to learn the truth about ourselves, and I appreciate the courage your last letter shows; you have faced the truth, and having learned it, you write it to me in all simplicity. I like

you better now, Oliver Gogarty, than I ever did before, and I always liked you. But it seems to me that to allow you to confess yourself without confessing myself, without revealing the woman's soul in me as you have revealed the man's soul in yourself, would be unworthy.

"Our destinies got somewhat entangled, there was a wrench, the knot was broken, and the thread was wound upon another spool. The unravelling of the piece must have perplexed you, and you must have wondered why the shape and the pattern should have passed suddenly away into thread again, and then, after a lapse of time, why the weaving should have begun again.

"You must have wondered why I wrote to you, and you must have wondered why I forgave you for the wrong you did me. I guessed that our friendship when I was in the parish was a little more than the platonic friendship that you thought it was, so when you turned against me, and were unkind, I found an excuse for you. When my hatred was bitterest, I knew somehow, at the back of my mind—for I only allowed myself to think of it occasionally—that you acted from—there is but one word—jealousy (not a pretty word from your point of view); and it must have shocked you, as a man and as a priest, to find that the woman whom you thought so much of, and whose society gave you so much pleasure (I know the times we passed together were as pleasant to you as they were to me), should suddenly without warning appear in a totally different light, and in a light which must have seemed to you mean and sordid. The discovery that I was going to have a baby threw me suddenly down from the pedestal on which you had placed me; your idol was broken, and your feelings—for you are one of those men who feel deeply—got the better of you, and you indulged in a few incautious words in your church.

"I thought of these things sometimes, not often, I

admit, in the little London lodging where I lived till my baby was born, seeing my gown in front getting shorter, and telling lies to good Mrs. Dent about the husband whom I said was abroad, whom I was expecting to return. That was a miserable time, but we won't talk of it any more. When Father O'Grady showed me the letter that you wrote him, I forgave you in a way. A woman forgives a man the wrongs he does when these wrongs are prompted by jealousy, for, after all, a woman is never really satisfied if a man is not a little jealous. His jealousy may prove inconvenient, and she may learn to hate it and think it an ugly thing and a crooked thing, but, from her point of view, love would not be complete without it.

"I smiled, of course, when I got your letter telling me that you had been to your sisters to ask them if they would take me as a schoolmistress in the convent, and I walked about smiling, thinking of your long innocent drive round the lake. I can see it all, dear man that you are, thinking you could settle everything, and that I would return to Ireland to teach barefooted little children their Catechism and their A, B, C. How often has the phrase been used in our letters! It was a pretty idea of yours to go to your sisters; you did not know then that you cared for me—you only thought of atonement. I suppose we must always be deceived. Mr. Poole says self-deception is the very law of life. We live enveloped in self-deception as in a film; now and again the film breaks like a cloud and the light shines through. We veil our eyes, for we do not like the light. It is really very difficult to tell the truth, Father Gogarty; I find it difficult now to tell you why I wrote all these letters. Because I liked you? Yes, and a little bit because I wished you to suffer; I don't think I shall ever get nearer the truth than that. But when I asked you to meet us abroad, I did so in good faith, for you are a

clever man, and Mr. Poole's studies would please you. At the back of my mind I suppose I thought to meet him would do you good; I thought, perhaps, that he might redeem you from some conventions and prejudices. I don't like priests; the priest was the only thing about you I never liked. Was it in some vain, proselytizing idea that I invited you? Candidly, I don't know, and I don't think I ever shall. We know so very little about this world that it seems to me waste of time to think about the next. My notion is that the wisest plan is to follow the mood of the moment, with an object more or less definite in view. . . . Nothing is worth more than that. I am at the present moment genuinely interested in culture, and therefore I did not like at all the book you sent me, 'The Imitation,' and I wrote to tell you to put it by, to come abroad and see pictures and statues in a beautiful country where people do not drink horrid porter, but nice wine, and where Sacraments are left to the old people who have nothing else to interest them. I suppose it was a cruel, callous letter, but I did not mean it so; I merely wanted to give you a glimpse of my new life and my new point of view. As for this letter, Heaven knows how you will take it—whether you will hate me for it or like me; but since you wrote quite frankly to me, confessing yourself from end to end, I feel bound to tell you everything I know about myself—and since I left Ireland I have learned a great deal about myself and about life. Perhaps I should have gone on writing to you if Mr. Poole had not one day said that no good would come of this long correspondence; he suspected I was a disturbing influence, and, as you were determined to live in Ireland, he said it were better that you should live in conventions and prejudices, without them your life would be impossible.

"Then came your last letter, and it showed me how right Mr. Poole was. Nothing remains now but to beg

your forgiveness for having disturbed your life. The disturbance is, perhaps, only a passing one. You may recover your ideas—the ideas that are necessary to you—or you may go on discovering the truth, and in the end may perhaps find a way whereby you may leave your parish without causing scandal. To be quite truthful, that is what I hope will happen. However this may be, I hope if we ever meet again it will not be till you have ceased to be a priest. But all this is a long way ahead. We are going East, and shall not be back for many months; we are going to visit the buried cities in Turkestan. I do not know if you have ever heard about these cities. They were buried in sand somewhere about a thousand years ago, and some parts have been disinterred lately. Vaults were broken into in search of treasure. Gold and precious stones were discovered, but far more valuable than the gold and silver, so says Mr. Poole, are certain papyri now being deciphered by the learned professors of Berlin.

"You know the name of Mr. Poole's book, 'The Source of the Christian River'? He had not suspected that its source went further back than Palestine, but now he says that some papyri may be found that will take it far back into Central Asia.

"I am going with him on this quest. It sounds a little absurd, doesn't it? my going in quest of the Christian river? But if one thinks for a moment, one thing is as absurd as another. Do you know, I find it difficult to take life seriously, and I walk about the streets thinking of you, Father Gogarty, and the smile that will come over your face, half angry, half pleased, when you read that your schoolmistress is going to Central Asia in quest of the Christian river. What will you be doing all this time? You say that you cannot leave your parish because you fear to give scandal; you fear to pain the poor people, who have been good to you and who have given

you money, and your scruple is a noble one; I appreciate and respect it. But we must not think entirely of our duties to others; we must think of our duties to ourselves. Each one must try to realize himself—I mean that we must try to bring the gifts that Nature gave us to fruition. Nature has given you many gifts: I wonder what will become of you?

"Very sincerely yours,

"Nora Glynn."

"Good God, how I love that woman!" the priest said, awaking from his reverie, for the clock told him that he had sat for nearly three-quarters of an hour, her letter in his hand, after having read it. And lying back in his armchair, his hands clasped, his eyes fixed on the window, listening to the birds singing in the vine—it was already in leaf, and the shadows of the leaves danced across the carpet—he sought to define that sense of delight—he could find no other words for it—which she exhaled unconsciously as a flower exhales its perfume, that joy of life which she scattered with as little premeditation as the birds scattered their songs. But though he was constantly seeking some new form of expression of her charm, he always came back to the words "sense of delight." Sometimes he added that sense of delight which we experience when we go out of the house on an April morning and find everything growing about us, the sky wilful and blue, and the clouds going by, saying, "Be happy, as we are."

She was so different from every other woman. All other women were plain instincts, come into the world for the accomplishment of things that women had accomplished for thousands of years. Other women think as their mothers thought, and as their daughters will think, expressing the thoughts of the countless generations behind and in front of them. But this woman was moved merely by impulses; and what is more inexplicable than

an impulse? What is the spring but an impulse? and this woman was mysterious, evanescent as its breath, with the same irresponsible seduction. He was certain that she was at last clear to him, though she might become dark to him again. One day she had come to gather flowers, and while arranging her posy she said casually: "You are a ruler in this parish; you direct it, the administration of the parish is your business, and I am the little amusement that you turn to when your business is done." He had not known how to answer her. In this way her remarks often covered him with confusion. She just thought as she pleased, and spoke as she pleased, and he returned to his idea that she was more like the primitive woman than anybody else.

Pondering on her words for the hundredth time, they seemed to him stranger than ever. That any human being should admit that she was but the delight of another's life seemed at first only extraordinary, but if one considered her words, it seemed to signify knowledge—latent, no doubt—that her beauty was part of the great agency. Her words implied that she was aware of her mission. It was her unconscious self that spoke, and it was that which gave significance to her words.

His thoughts melted into nothingness, and when he awoke from his reverie he was thinking that Nora Glynn had come into his life like a fountain, shedding living water upon it, awakening it. And taking pleasure in the simile, he said, "A fountain better than anything else expresses this natural woman," controlled, no doubt, by a law, but one hidden from him. "A fountain springs out of earth into air; it sings a tune that cannot be caught and written down in notes; the rising and falling water is full of iridescent colour, and to the wilting roses the fountain must seem not a natural thing, but a spirit, and I too think of her as a spirit." And his thoughts falling away again he became vaguely but intensely conscious of all

the beauty and grace and the enchantment of the senses that appeared to him in the name of Nora Glynn.

At that moment Catherine came into the room. "No, not now," he said; and he went into the garden and through the wicket at the other end, thinking tenderly how he had gone out last year on a day just like the present day, trying to keep thoughts of her out of his mind.

The same fifteenth of May! But last year the sky was low and full of cotton-like clouds; and he remembered how the lake warbled about the smooth limestone shingle, and how the ducks talked in the reeds, how the reeds themselves seemed to be talking. This year the clouds lifted; there was more blue in the sky, less mist upon the water, and it was this day last year that sorrow began to lap about his heart like soft lake-water. He thought then that he was grieving deeply, but since last year he had learned all that a man could know of grief. For last year he was able to take an interest in the spring, to watch for the hawthorn-bloom; but this year he did not trouble to look their way. What matter whether they bloomed a week earlier or a week later? As a matter of fact they were late, the frost having thrown them back, and there would be no flowers till June. How beautifully the tasselled branches of the larches swayed, throwing shadows on the long May grass! "And they are not less beautiful this year, though they are less interesting to me," he said.

He wandered through the woods, over the country, noting the different signs of spring, for, in spite of his sorrow, he could not but admire the slender spring. He could not tell why, perhaps because he had always associated Nora with the gaiety of the spring-time. She was thin like the spring, and her laughter was blithe like the spring. She seemed to him like a spirit, and isn't the spring like a spirit? She was there in the cow-parsley just coming up, and the sight of the campions between the white spangles reminded him of the pink flowers she wore

in her hat. The underwood was full of bluebells, but her eyes were not blue. The aspens were still brown, but in a month the dull green leaves, silvery underneath, would be fluttering at the end of their long stems. And the continual agitation of the aspen-leaf seemed to him rather foolish, reminding him of a weak-minded woman clamouring for sympathy always. The aspen was an untidy tree; he was not sure that he liked the tree, and if one is in doubt whether one likes or dislikes, the chances are that one dislikes. Who would think of asking himself if he liked beech-trees, or larches, or willows? A little later he stood lost in admiration of a line of willows all a-row in front of a stream; they seemed to him like girls curtseying, and the delicacy of the green and yellow buds induced him to meditate on the mysteries that common things disclose.

Seeing a bird disappear into a hole in the wall, he climbed up. The bird pecked at him, for she was hatching. "A starling," he said. In the field behind his house, under the old hawthorn-tree, an amiable-looking donkey had given birth to a foal, and he watched the little thing, no bigger than a sheep, covered with long grey hair. . . . There were some parishioners he would be sorry to part with, and there was Catherine. If he went away he would never see her again, nor those who lived in the village. All this present reality would fade, his old church, surrounded with gravestones and stunted Scotch firs, would become like a dream, every year losing a little in colour and outline. He was going, he did not know when, but he was going. For a long time the feeling had been gathering in him that he was going, and her letter increased that feeling. He would go just as soon as a reputable way of leaving his parish was revealed to him.

By the help of his reason he could not hope to find out the way. Nothing seemed more impossible than that a way should be found for him to leave his parish without

giving scandal; but however impossible things may seem to us, nothing is impossible to Nature. He must put his confidence in Nature; he must listen to her. She would tell him. And he lay all the afternoon listening to the reeds and the ducks talking together in the lake. Very often the wood was like a harp; a breeze touched the strings, and every now and then the murmur seemed about to break into a little tune, and as if in emulation, or because he remembered his part in the music, a blackbird, perched near to his mate, whose nest was in the hawthorns growing out of the tumbled wall, began to sing a joyful lay in a rich round contralto, soft and deep as velvet. "All nature," he said, "is talking or singing. This is talking and singing time. But my heart can speak to no one, and I seek places where no one will come." And he began to ask if God would answer his prayer if he prayed that he might die.

The sunlit grass, already long and almost ready for the scythe, was swept by shadows of the larches, those long, shelving boughs hung with green tassels, moving mysteriously above him. Birds came and went, each on its special errand. Never was Nature more inveigling, more restful. He shut his eyes, shapes passed, dreams filled the interspaces. Little thoughts began. Why had he never brought her here? A memory of her walking under these larches would be delightful. The murmur of the boughs dissipated his dreams or changed them, or brought new ones; his consciousness grew fainter, and he could not remember what his last thoughts were when he opened his eyes.

And then he wandered out of the wood, into the sunlit country, along the dusty road, trying to take an interest in everyone whom he met. It was fair-day. He met drovers and chatted to them about the cattle; he heard a wonderful story about a heifer that one of them had sold, and that found her way back home again, twenty-five

miles, and a little further on a man came across the fields towards him with a sheep-dog at his heels, a beautiful bitch who showed her teeth prettily when she was spoken to; she had long gold hair, and it was easy to see that she liked to be admired.

"They're all alike, the feminine sex," the priest thought. "She's as pretty as Nora, and acts very much the same."

He walked on again, stopping to speak with everybody, glad to listen to every story. One was of a man who lived by poaching. He hadn't slept in a bed for years, but lay down in the mountains and the woods. He trapped rabbits and beat people; sometimes he enticed boys far away, and then turned upon them savagely. Well, the police had caught him again, and this time he wouldn't get off with less than five years. Listening to Mike Mulroy's talk, Father Oliver forgot his own grief. A little further on they came upon a cart filled with pigs. The cart broke down suddenly, and the pigs escaped in all directions, and the efforts of a great number of country people were directed to collecting them. Father Oliver joined in the chase, and it proved a difficult one, owing to the density of the wood that the pigs had taken refuge in. At last he saw them driven along the road, for it had been found impossible to mend the cart, and at this moment Father Oliver began to think that he would like to be a pig-driver, or better still, a poacher like Carmody. A wandering mood was upon him. Anything were better than to return to his parish, and the thought of the confessions he would have to hear on Saturday night and of the Mass he would have to say on Sunday was bitter indeed, for he had ceased to believe in these things. To say Mass, believing the Mass to be but a mummery, was detestable. To remain in his parish meant a constant degradation of himself. When a parishioner sent to ask him to attend a sick call, he could barely bring himself to

anoint the dying man. Some way out of the dilemma must be found, and stopping suddenly so that he might think more clearly, he asked himself why he did not wander out of the parish instead of following the path which led him back to the lake? thinking that it was because it is hard to break with habits, convictions, prejudices. The beautiful evening did not engage his thoughts, and he barely listened to the cuckoo, and altogether forgot to notice the bluebells, campions, and cow-parsley; and it was not till he stood on the hilltop overlooking the lake that he began to recover his self-possession.

"The hills," he said, "are turned hither and thither, not all seen in profile, and that is why they are so beautiful."

The sunlit crests and the shadow-filled valleys roused him. In the sky a lake was forming, the very image and likeness of the lake under the hill. One glittered like silver, the other like gold, and so wonderful was this celestial lake that he began to think of immortals, of an assembly of goddesses waiting for their gods, or a goddess waiting on an island for some mortal, sending bird messengers to him. A sort of pagan enchantment was put upon him, and he rose up from the ferns to see an evening as fair as Nora and as fragrant. He tried to think of the colour of her eyes, which were fervid and oracular, and of her hands, which were long and curved, with fragile fingers, of her breath, which was sweet, and her white, even teeth. The evening was like her, as subtle and as persuasive, and the sensation of her presence became so clear that he shut his eyes, feeling her about him —as near to him as if she lay in his arms, just as he had felt her that night in the wood, but then she was colder and more remote. He walked along the foreshore feeling like an instrument that had been tuned. His perception seemed to have been indefinitely increased, and it seemed to him as if he were in communion with the stones in the

earth and the clouds in heaven; it seemed to him as if the past and the future had become one.

The moment was one of extraordinary sweetness; never might such a moment happen in his life again. And he watched the earth and sky enfolded in one tender harmony of rose and blue—blue fading to grey, and the lake afloat amid vague shores, receding like a dream through sleep.

CHAP. XII.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,

"*June* 18, 19—.

"THOUGHTS are rising up in my mind, and I am eager to write them down quickly, and with as little consideration as possible. Perhaps my thoughts will seem trivial when I have written them, but the emotion that inspired them was very wonderful and overpowering. I am, as it were, propelled to my writing-table. I must write: my emotion must find expression. Even if I were sure you would not get this letter for months, I should write it. I believe if I knew you would never get it, I should write. But if I send it to Beechwood Hall it will be forwarded, I suppose, for you will not remain whole months without hearing from Europe. . . . In any case, you will get this letter on your return, and it will ease my heart to write it. Above all things, I would have you know that the report that I was drowned while bathing is not true, for a report to this effect will certainly find its way into the local papers, and in these days, once a piece of news gets reported, it flies along from newspaper to newspaper, and newspapers have a knack of straying into our hands when they contain a disagreeable item of news.

"You will remember how the interview with Mr. Poole,

published in *Illustrated England,* came into my hands. That was the first number of *Illustrated England* I had seen. Father O'Grady brought it here and left it upon the table, and only the fate that is over us knows why. In the same way, a paper containing a report of my supposed drowning may reach you when you return to England, and, as I do not want you to think that I have gone out of this life, I am writing to tell you that the report of my death is untrue, or, to speak more exactly, it will not be true, if my arms and legs can make it a false report. These lines will set you wondering if I have taken leave of my senses. Read on, and my sanity will become manifest. Some day next month I intend to swim across the lake, and you will, I think, appreciate this adventure. You praised my decision not to leave my parish because of the pain it would give the poor people. You said that you liked me better for it, and it is just because my resolve has not wavered that I have decided to swim across the lake. Only in this way can I quit my parish without leaving a scandalous name behind me. Moreover, the means whereby I was enlightened are so strange that I find it difficult to believe that Providence is not on my side.

"Have not men always believed in bird augury from the beginning of time? and have not prognostications a knack of coming true? I feel sure that you would think as I do if what had happened to me happened to you. Yet when you read this letter you will say, 'No sooner has he disentangled himself from one superstition than he drops into another!' However this may be, I cannot get it out of my head that the strangely ill-fated bird that came out of the wood last February was sent for a purpose. But I have not told you about that bird. In my last letter my mind was occupied by other things, and there was no reason why I should have mentioned it, for it seemed at the time merely a curious accident—no more

curious than the hundred and one accidents that happen every day. I believe these things are called coincidences. But to the story. The day I went out skating there was a shooting-party in Derrinrush, and at the close of day, in the dusk, a bird got up from the sedge, and one of the shooters, mistaking it for a woodcock, fired, wounding the bird.

"We watched it till we saw it fall on the shore of Castle Island, and, thinking that it would linger there for days, dying by inches, I started off with the intention of saving it from a lingering death, but a shot had done that. One pellet would have been enough, for the bird was but a heap of skin and feathers, not to be wondered at, its legs being tied together with a piece of stout string, twisted and tied so that it would last for years. And this strangely ill-fated curlew set me thinking if it were a tame bird escaped from captivity, but tame birds lose quickly their instinct of finding food. 'It must have been freed yesterday or the day before,' I said to myself, and in pondering how far a bird might fly in the night, this curlew came to occupy a sort of symbolic relation towards my past and my future life, and it was in thinking of it that the idea occurred to me that, if I could cross the lake on the ice, I might swim it in the summer-time when the weather was warm, having, of course, hidden a bundle of clothes amid the rocks on the Joycetown side. My clerical clothes will be found on this side, and the assumption will be, of course, that I swam out too far.

"This way of escape seemed at first fantastic and unreal, but it has come to seem to me the only practical way out of my difficulty. In no other way can I leave the parish without giving pain to the poor people, who have been very good to me. And you, who appreciated my scruples on this point, will, I am sure, understand the great pain it would give my sisters if I were to leave the Church. It would give them so much pain that I shrink

from trying to imagine it. They would look upon themselves as disgraced, and the whole family. My disappearance from the parish would ever do them harm—Eliza's school would suffer for sure. This may seem an exaggeration, but certainly Eliza would never quite get over it. If this way of escape had not been revealed to me, I don't think I ever should have found courage to leave, and if I didn't leave I should die. Life is so ordered that a trace remains of every act, but the trace is not always discovered, and I trust you implicitly. You will never show this letter to anyone; you will never tell anyone.

"The Church would allow me, no doubt, to pick up a living as best I could, and would not interfere with me till I said something or wrote something that the Church thought would lessen its power; then the cry of unfrocked priest would be raised against me, and calumny, the great ecclesiastical weapon, would be used. I do not know what my future life will be: my past has been so beset with misfortune that, once I reach the other side, I shall never look back. I cannot find words to tell you of the impatience with which I wait the summer-time, the fifteenth of July, when the moon will be full. I cannot think what would have happened to me if I had stayed at home the afternoon that the curlew was shot; something would have happened, for we cannot go on always sacrificing ourselves. We can sacrifice ourselves for a time, but we cannot sacrifice ourselves all our life long, unless we begin to take pleasure in the immolation of self, and then it is no longer sacrifice. Something must have happened, or I should gave gone mad.

"I had suffered so much in the parish. I think the places in which we have suffered become distasteful to us, and the instinct to wander takes us. A migratory bird goes, or dies of home-sickness; home is not always where we are born—it is among ideas that are dear to us: and it

is exile to live among people who do not share our ideas. Something must have happened to me. I can think of nothing except suicide or what did happen, for I could never have made up my mind to give pain to the poor people and to leave a scandalous name behind; still less could I continue to administer Sacraments that I ceased to believe in. I can imagine nothing more shameful than the life of a man who continues his administrations after he has ceased to believe in them, especially a Catholic priest, so precise and explicit are the Roman Sacraments. A very abject life it is to murmur *Absolve te* over the heads of parishioners, and to place wafers on their tongues, when we have ceased to believe that we have power to forgive sins and to turn biscuits into God. A layman may have doubts, and continue to live his life as before, without troubling to take the world into his confidence, but a priest may not. The priest is a paid agent and the money an unbelieving priest receives, if he be not inconceivably hardened in sin, must be hateful to him, and his conscience can leave him no rest.

"At first I used to suspect my conversion, and began to think it unseemly that a man should cease to believe that we must renounce this life in order to gain another, without much preliminary study of the Scriptures; I began to look upon myself as a somewhat superficial person whose religious beliefs yielded before the charm of a pretty face and winsome personality, but this view of the question no longer seems superficial. I believe now that the superficial ones are those who think that it is only in the Scriptures that we may discover whether we have a right to live. Our belief in books rather than in Nature is one of humanity's most curious characteristics, and a very irreligious one, it seems to me; and I am glad to think that it was your sunny face that raised up my crushed instincts, that brought me back to life, and ever

since you have been associated in my mind with the sun and the spring-tide.

"One day in the beginning of March, coming back from a long walk on the hills, I heard the bleat of the lamb and the impatient cawing of the rook that could not put its nest together in the windy branches, and as I stopped to listen it seemed to me that something passed by in the dusk: the spring-tide itself seemed to be fleeting across the tillage towards the scant fields. As the spring-tide advanced I discovered a new likeness to you in the daffodil; it is so shapely a flower. I should be puzzled to give a reason, but it reminds me of antiquity, and you were always a thing divorced from the Christian ideal. While mourning you, my poor instincts discovered you in the wind-shaken trees, and in the gaiety of the sun, and the flowers that May gives us. I shall be gone at the end of July, when the carnations are in bloom, but were I here I am certain many of them would remind me of you. There have been saints who have loved Nature, but I always wondered how it was so, for Nature is like a woman. I might have read the Scriptures again and again, and all the arguments that Mr. Poole can put forward, without my faith being in the least shaken. When the brain alone thinks, the thinking is very thin and impoverished. It seems to me that the best thinking is done when the whole man thinks, the flesh and the brain together, and for the whole man to think the whole man must live; and the life I have lived hitherto has been a thin life, for my body lived only. And not even all my body. My mind and body were separated: neither were of any use to me. I owe everything to you. My case cannot be defined merely as that of a priest who gave up his religion because a pretty woman came by. He who says that does not try to understand; he merely contents himself with uttering facile commonplace. What he has to learn is the great oneness in Nature. There is but one

element, and we but one of its many manifestations. If this were not so, why should your whiteness and colour and gaiety remind me always of the spring-time?

"My pen is running fast, I hardly know what I am writing, but it seems to me that I am beginning to see much clearer. The mists are dissolving, and life emerges like the world at daybreak. I am thinking now of an old decrepit house with sagging roof and lichen-covered walls, and all the doors and windows nailed up. Every generation nailed up a door or a window till all were nailed up. In the dusty twilight creatures wilt and pray. About the house the sound of shutters creaking on rusty hinges never ceases. Your hand touched one, and the shutters fell, and I found myself looking upon the splendid sun shining on hills and fields, wooded prospects with rivers winding through the great green expanses. At first I dared not look, and withdrew into the shadow tremblingly; but the light drew me forth again, and now I look upon the world without fear. I am going to leave that decrepit dusty house and mix with my fellows, and maybe blow a horn on the hillside to call comrades together. My hands and eyes are eager to know what I have become possessed of. I owe to you my liberation from prejudices and conventions. Ideas are passed on. We learn more from each other than from books. I was unconsciously affected by your example. You dared to stretch out both hands to life and grasp it; you accepted the spontaneous natural living wisdom of your instincts when I was rolled up like a dormouse in the dead wisdom of codes and formulas, dogmas and opinions. I never told you how I became a priest. I did not know until quite lately. I think I began to suspect my vocation when you left the parish.

"I remember walking by the lake just this time last year, with the story of my life singing in my head, and you in the background beating the time. You know, we

had a shop in Tinnick, and I had seen my father standing before a high desk by a dusty window year after year, selling half-pounds of tea, hanks of onions, and farm implements, and felt that if I married my cousin, Annie McGrath, our lives would reproduce those of my father and mother in every detail. I couldn't undertake the job, and for that began to believe I had a vocation for the priesthood; but I can see now that it was not piety that sent me to Maynooth, but a certain spirit of adventure, a dislike of the commonplace, of the prosaic—that is to say, of the repetition of the same things. I was interested in myself, in my own soul, and I did not want to accept something that was outside of myself, such as the life of a shopman behind a counter, or that of a clerk of the petty sessions, or the habit of a policeman. These were the careers that were open to me, and when I was hesitating, wondering if I should be able to buy up the old mills and revive the trade in Tinnick, my sister Eliza reminded me that there had always been a priest in the family. The priesthood seemed to offer opportunities of realizing myself, of preserving the spirit within me. It offered no such opportunities to me. I might as well have become a policeman, and all that I have learned since is that everyone must try to cling to his own soul; that is the only binding law. If we are here for anything, it is surely for that.

"But one does not free one's self from habits and ideas, that have grown almost inveterate, without much pain and struggle; one falls back many times, and there are always good reasons for following the rut. We believe that the rutted way leads us somewhere: it leads us nowhere, the rutted way is only a seeming; for each man received his truth in the womb. You say in your letter that our destinies got entangled, and that the piece that was being woven ran out into thread, and was rewound upon another spool. It seemed to you and it

seemed to me that there is no pattern; we think there is none because Nature's pattern is undistinguishable to our eyes, her looms are so vast, but sometimes even our little sight can follow a design here and there. And does it not seem to you that, after all, there was some design in what has happened? You came and released me from conventions, just as the spring releases the world from winter rust.

"A strange idea has come into my mind, and I cannot help smiling at the topsyturvydom of Nature, or what seems to be topsyturvydom. You, who began by living in your instincts, are now wandering beyond Palestine in search of scrolls; and I, who began my life in scrolls, am now going to try to pick up the lost thread of my instincts in some great commercial town, in London or New York. My life for a long time will be that of some poor clerk or some hack journalist, picking up thirty shillings a week when he is in luck. I imagine myself in a threadbare suit of clothes edging my way along the pavement, nearing a great building, and making my way to my desk, and, when the day's work is done, returning home along the same pavement to a room high up among the rafters, close to the sky, in some cheap quarter.

"I do not doubt my ability to pick up a living—it will be a shameful thing indeed if I cannot; for the poor curlew with its legs tied together managed to live somehow, and cannot I do as much? And I have taken care that no fetters shall be placed upon my legs or chain about my neck. Anything may happen—life is full of possibilities—but my first concern must be how I may earn my living. To earn one's living is an obligation that can only be dispensed with at one's own great risk. What may happen afterwards, Heaven knows! I may meet you, or I may meet another woman, or I may remain unmarried. I do not intend to allow myself to think of these things; my thoughts are set on one thing only—

how to get to New York, and how I shall pick up a living when I get there. Again I thank you for what you have done for me, for the liberation you have brought me of body and mind. I need not have added the words 'body and mind,' for these are not two things, but one thing. And that is the lesson I have learned. Good-bye.

"Oliver Gogarty."

CHAP. XIII.

IT would be a full moon on the fifteenth of July, and every night he went out on the hillside to watch the horned moon swelling to a disc.

And on the fifteenth, the day he had settled for his departure, as he sat thinking how he would go down to the lake in a few hours, a letter started to his mind which, as well as he could remember, was written in a foolish, vainglorious mood—a stupid letter that must have made him appear a fool in her eyes. Had he not said something about—— The thought eluded him; he could only remember the general tone of his letter, and in it he seemed to consider Nora as a sort of medicine—a cure for religion.

He should have written her a simple little letter, telling her that he was leaving Ireland because he had suffered a great deal, and would write to her from New York, whereas he had written her the letter of a booby. And feeling he must do something to rectify his mistake, he went to his writing-table, but he had hardly put the pen to the paper when he heard a step on the gravel outside his door.

"Father Moran, your reverence."

"I see that I'm interrupting you. You're writing."

"No, I assure you."

"But you've got a pen in your hand."

"It can wait—a matter of no importance. Sit down."

"Now, you'll tell me if I'm in the way?"

"My good man, why are you talking like that? Why should you be in the way?"

"Well, if you're sure you've nothing to do, may I stay to supper?"

"To supper?"

"But I see that I'm in the way."

"No; I tell you you're not in the way. And you're going to stay to supper."

Father Oliver flung himself between Father Moran and the door; Father Moran allowed himself to be led back to the armchair. Father Oliver took the chair opposite him, for he couldn't send Moran away; he mustn't do anything that would give rise to suspicion.

"You're quite sure I'm not in the way—I'm not interfering with any plans?"

"Quite sure. I'm glad you have come this evening."

"Are you? Well, I had to come."

"You had to come!"

"Yes, I had to come; I had to come to see if anything had happened. You needn't look at me like that; I haven't been drinking, and I haven't gone out of my mind. I can only tell you that I had to come to see you this evening."

"And you don't know why?"

"No, I don't; I can't tell you exactly why I've come. As I was reading my breviary, walking up and down the road in front of the house, I felt that I must see you. I never felt anything like it in my life before. I had to come."

"And you didn't expect to find me?"

"Well, I didn't. How did you guess that?"

"You'd have hardly come all that way to find me sitting here in this armchair."

"That's right. It wasn't sitting in that chair I expected to see you; I didn't expect to see you at all—at

least, I don't think I did. You see, it was all very queer, for it was as if somebody had got me by the shoulders. It was as if I were being pushed every yard of the road. Something was running in my mind that I shouldn't see you again, or if I did see you that it would be for the last time. You seemed to me as if you were going away on a long journey."

"Was it dying or dead you saw me?"

"That I can't say. If I said any more I shouldn't be telling the truth. No, it wasn't the same feeling when I came to tell you I couldn't put up with the loneliness any more—the night I came here roaring for drink. I was thinking of myself then, and that you might save me or do something for me—give me drink or cure me. I don't know which thought it was that was running in my head, but I had to come to you all the same, just as I had to come to you to-day. I say it was different, because then I was on my own business; but this time it seemed to me that I was on yours. One good turn deserves another, as they say; and something was beating in my head that I could help you, serve as a stay; so I had to come. Where should I be now if it were not for you? I can see you're thinking that it was only nonsense that was running in my head, but you won't be saying it was nonsense that brought me the night I came like a madman roaring for drink. If there was a miracle that night, why shouldn't there be a miracle to-night? And if a miracle ever happened in the world, it happened that night, I'm thinking. Do you remember the dark grey clouds tearing across the sky, and we walking side by side, I trying to get away from you? I was that mad that I might have thrown you into the bog-hole if the craving had not passed from me. And it was just lifted from me as one might take the cap off one's head. You remember the prayer we said, leaning over the bit of wall looking across the bog? There

was no lonesomeness that night coming home, Gogarty, though a curlew might have felt a bit."

"A curlew!"

"Well, there were curlews and plovers about, and a starving ass picking grass between the road and the bog-hole. That night will be ever in my mind. Where would I be now if it hadn't been that you kept on with me and brought me back, cured? It wouldn't be a cassock that would be on my back, but some old rag of a coat. There's nothing in this world, Gogarty, more unlucky than a suspended priest. I think I can see myself in the streets, hanging about some public-house, holding horses attached to a cab-rank."

"Lord of heaven, Moran! what are you coming here to talk to me in this way for? The night you're speaking of was bad enough, but your memory of it is worse. Nothing of what you're saying would have happened; a man like you would be always able to pick up a living."

"And where would I be picking up a living if it weren't on a cab-rank, or you either?"

"Well, 'tis melancholy enough you are this evening."

"And all for nothing, for there you are, sitting in your old chair. I see I've made a fool of myself."

"That doesn't matter. You see, if one didn't do what one felt like doing, one would have remorse of conscience for ever after."

"I suppose so. It was very kind of you, Moran, to come all this way."

"What is it but a step? Three miles——"

"And a half."

Moved by a febrile impatience, which he could not control, Father Oliver got up from his chair.

"Now, Moran, isn't it strange? I wonder how it was that you should have come to tell me that you were going off to drink somewhere. You said you were going to lie

up in a public-house and drink for days, and yet you didn't think of giving up the priesthood."

"What are you saying, Gogarty? Don't you know well enough I'd have been suspended? Didn't I tell you that drink had taken that power over me that, if roaring hell were open, and I sitting on the brink of it and a table beside me with whisky on it, I should fill myself a glass?"

"And knowing you were going down to hell?"

"Yes, that night nothing would have stopped me. But, talking of hell, I heard a good story yesterday. Pat Carabine was telling his flock last Sunday of the tortures of the damned, and having said all he could about devils and pitchforks and caldrons, he came to a sudden pause—a blank look came into his face, and, looking round the church and seeing the sunlight streaming through the door, his thoughts went off at a tangent. 'Now, boys,' he said, 'if this fine weather continues, I hope you'll be all out in the bog next Tuesday bringing home my turf.'"

Father Oliver laughed, but his laughter did not satisfy Father Moran, and he told how on another occasion Father Pat had finished his sermon on hell by telling his parishioners that the devil was the landlord of hell. "And I leave yourself to imagine the groaning that was heard in the church that morning, for weren't they all small tenants? But I'm afraid my visit has upset you, Gogarty."

"How is that?"

"You don't seem to enjoy a laugh like you used to."

"Well, I was thinking at that moment that I've heard you say that, even though you gave way to drink, you never had any doubts about the reality of the hell that awaited you for your sins."

"That's the way it is, Gogarty, one believes, but one doesn't act up to one's belief. Human nature is inconsistent. Nothing is queerer than human nature, and will you be surprised if I tell you that I believe I was a better

priest when I was drinking than I am now that I'm sober? I was saying that human nature is very queer; and it used to seem queer to myself. I looked upon drink as a sort of blackmail I paid to the devil so that he might let me be a good priest in everything else. That's the way it was with me, and there was more sense in the idea than you'd be thinking, for when the drunken fit was over I used to pray as I have never prayed since. If there was not a bit of wickedness in the world, there would be no goodness. And as for faith, drink never does any harm to one's faith whatsoever; there's only one thing that takes a man's faith from him, and that is woman. You remember the expulsions at Maynooth, and you know what they were for. Well, that sin is a bad one, but I don't think it affects a man's faith any more than drink does. It is woman that kills the faith in men."

"I think you're right: woman is the danger. The Church dreads her. Woman is life."

"I don't quite understand you."

Catherine came into the room to lay the cloth, and Father Oliver asked Father Moran to come out into the garden. It was now nearing its prime. In a few days more the carnations would be all in bloom, and Father Oliver pondered that very soon it would begin to look neglected. "In a year or two it will have drifted back to the original wilderness, to briar and weed," he said to himself; and he dwelt on his love of this tiny plot of ground, with a wide path running down the centre, flower borders on each side, and a narrow path round the garden beside the hedge. The potato ridges, and the runners, and the cabbages came in the middle. Gooseberry-bushes and currant-bushes grew thickly, there were little apple-trees here and there, and in one corner the two large apple-trees under which he sat and smoked his pipe in the evenings.

"You're very snug here, smoking your pipe under your apple-trees."

"Yes, in a way; but I think I was happier where you are."

"The past is always pleasant to look upon."

"You think so?"

The priests walked to the end of the garden, and, leaning on the wicket, Father Moran said:

"We've had queer weather lately—dull heavy weather. See how low the swallows are flying. When I came up the drive, the gravel space in front of the house was covered with them, the old birds feeding the young ones."

"And you were noticing these things, and believing that Providence had sent you here to bid me good-bye."

"Isn't it when the nerves are on a stretch that we notice little things that don't concern us at all?"

"Yes, Moran; you are right. I've never known you as wise as you are this evening."

Catherine appeared in the kitchen door. She had come to tell them their supper was ready. During the meal the conversation turned on the roofing of the abbey and the price of timber, and when the tablecloth had been removed the conversation swayed between the price of building materials and the Archbishop's fear lest he should meet a violent death, as it had been prophesied if he allowed a roof to be put upon Kilronan.

"You know I don't altogether blame him, and I don't think anyone does at the bottom of his heart, for what has been foretold generally comes to pass sooner or later."

"The Archbishop is a good Catholic who believes in everything the Church teaches—in the Divinity of our Lord, the Immaculate Conception, and the Pope's indulgences. And why should he be disbelieving in that which has been prophesied for generations about the Abbot of Kilronan?"

"Don't you believe in these things?"

"Does anyone know exactly what he believes? Does the Archbishop really believe every day of the year and every hour of every day that the Abbot of Kilronan will be slain on the highroad when a De Stanton is again Abbot?" Father Oliver was thinking of the slip of the tongue he had been guilty of before supper, when he said that the Church looks upon woman as the real danger, because she is the life of the world. He shouldn't have made that remark, for it might be remembered against him, and he fell to thinking of something to say that would explain it away.

"Well, Moran, we've had a pleasant evening; we've talked a good deal, and you've said many pleasant things and many wise ones. We've never had a talk that I enjoyed more, and I shall not forget it easily."

"How is that?"

"Didn't you say that it isn't drink that destroys a man's faith, but woman? And you said rightly, for woman is life."

"I was just about to ask you what you meant, when Catherine came in and interrupted us."

"Love of woman means estrangement from the Church, because you have to protect her and her children."

"Yes, that is so; that's how it works out. Now you won't be thinking me a fool for having come to see you this evening, Gogarty? One never knows when one's impulses are true and when they're false. If I hadn't come the night when the drink craving was upon me, I shouldn't have been here now."

"You did quite right to come, Moran; we've talked of a great many things."

"I've never talked so plainly to anyone before; I wonder what made me talk as I've been talking. We never talked like this before, did we, Gogarty? And I wouldn't have talked to another as I've talked to you. I shall never forget what I owe to you."

"You said you were going to leave the parish."

"I don't think I thought of anything except to burn myself up with drink. I wanted to forget, and I saw myself walking ahead day after day, drinking at every public-house."

"And just because I saved you, you thought you would come to save me?"

"There was something of that in it. Gad! it's very queer; there's no saying where things will begin and end. Pass me the tobacco, will you?"

Father Moran began to fill his pipe, and when he had finished filling it, he said:

"Now I must be going, and don't be trying to keep me; I've stopped long enough. If I were sent for a purpose——"

"But you don't believe seriously, Moran, that you were sent for a purpose?" Moran didn't answer, and his silence irritated Father Oliver, and, determined to probe his curate's conscience, he said: "Aren't you satisfied now that it was only an idea of your own? You thought to find me gone, and here I am sitting before you." After waiting for some time for Moran to speak, he said: "You haven't answered me."

"What should I be answering?"

"Do you still think you were sent for a purpose?"

"Well, I do."

"You do?"

The priests stood looking at each other for a while.

"Can't you give a reason?"

"No; I can give no reason. It's a feeling. I know I haven't reason on my side. There you are before me."

"It's very queer."

He would have liked to have called back Moran. It seemed a pity to let him go without having probed this matter to the bottom. He hadn't asked him if he had any idea in his mind about the future, as to what was

going to happen; but it was too late now. "Why did he come here disturbing me with his beliefs," he cried out, "poisoning my will?" for he had already begun to fear that Moran's visit might come between him and his project. The wind sighed a little louder, and Father Oliver said: "I wouldn't be minding his coming here to warn me, though he did say that it wasn't of his own will that he came, but something from the outside that kept pushing him along the road—I wouldn't be minding all that if this wind hadn't risen. But the omen may be a double one." At that moment the wind shook the trees about the house, and he fell to thinking that if he had started to swim the lake that night he would be now somewhere between Castle Island and the Joycetown shore, in the deepest and windiest part of the lake. "And pretty well tired I'd be at the time. If I'd started to-night a corpse would be floating about by now." The wind grew louder. Father Oliver imagined the waves slapping in his face, and then he imagined them slapping about the face of a corpse drifting towards the Joycetown shore.

CHAP. XIV.

THERE was little sleep in him that night, and turning on his pillow he sought sleep vainly, getting up at last when the dawn looked through the curtains. A wind was shaking the apple-trees, and he went back to bed, thinking that if it did not drop suddenly he would not be able to swim across the lake that evening. The hours passed between sleeping and waking, thinking of the newspaper articles he would write when he got to America, and dreaming of a fight between himself and an otter on the shore of Castle Island. Awaking with a cry, he sat up, afraid to seek sleep again lest he might dream of drown-

ing men. "A dream robs a man of all courage," and then falling back on his pillow, he said, "Whatever my dreams may be I shall go. Anything were better than to remain taking money from the poor people, playing the part of a hypocrite."

And telling Catherine that he could not look through her accounts that morning, he went out of the house to see what the lake was like. "Boisterous enough; it would take a good swimmer to get across to-day. Maybe the wind will drop in the afternoon."

The wind continued to rise, and next day he could only see white waves, tossing trees, and clouds tumbling over the mountains. He sat alone in his study staring at the lamp, the wind often awaking him from his reverie; and one night he remembered suddenly that it was no longer possible for him to cross the lake that month, even if the wind should cease, for he required not only a calm, but a moonlight night. And going out of the house, he walked about the hilltop, about the old thorn-bush, his hands clasped behind his back. He stood watching the moon setting high above the south-western horizon. But the lake—where was it? Had he not known that a lake was there, he would hardly have been able to discover one. All faint traces of one had disappeared, every shape was lost in blue shadow, and he wondered if his desire to go had gone with the lake. "The lake will return," he said, and next night he was on the hillside waiting for the lake to reappear. And every night it emerged from the shadow, growing clearer, till he could follow its winding shores. "In a few days, if this weather lasts, I shall be swimming out there." The thought crossed his mind that if the wind should rise again about the time of the full moon he would not be able to cross that year, for in September the water would be too cold for so long a swim. "But it isn't likely," he said; "the weather seems settled."

And the same close, blue weather that had prevailed before the storm returned, the same diffused sunlight.

"There is nothing so depressing," the priest said, "as seeing swallows flying a few feet from the ground."

It was about eight o'clock—the day had begun to droop in his garden—that he walked up and down the beds admiring his carnations. Every now and again the swallows collected into groups of some six or seven, and fled round the gables of his house shrieking. "This is their dinner-hour; the moths are about." He wondered on, thinking Nora lacking; for she had never appreciated that beautiful flower Miss Shifner. But her ear was finer than his; she found her delight in music.

A thought broke through his memories. He had forgotten to tell her he would write if he succeeded in crossing the lake, and if he didn't write she would never know whether he was living or dead. Perhaps it would be better so. After hesitating a moment, the desire to write to her took strong hold upon him, and he sought an excuse for writing. If he didn't write, she might think that he remained in Garranard. She knew nothing of Moran's visit, nor of the rising of the wind, nor of the waning of the moon; and he must write to her about these things, for if he were drowned she would think that God had willed it. But if he believed in God's intervention, he should stay in his parish and pray that grace might be given to him. "God doesn't bother himself about such trifles as my staying or my going," he muttered as he hastened towards his house, overcome by an immense joy. For he was happy only when he was thinking of her, or doing something connected with her, and to tell her of the fatality that seemed to pursue him would occupy an evening.

From Father Oliver Gogarty to Miss Nora Glynn.

"Garranard, Bohola,
"*July* 25, 19—.

"You will be surprised to hear from me so soon again, but I forgot to say in my last letter that, if I succeeded in crossing the lake, I would write to you from New York. And since then many things have happened, strange and significant coincidences."

And when he had related the circumstance of Father Moran's visit and the storm, he sought to excuse his half-beliefs that these were part of God's providence sent to warn him against leaving his parish.

"Only time can rid us of ideas that have been implanted in us in our youth, and that have grown up in our flesh and in our mind. A sudden influence may impel us to tear them up and cast them aside, but the seed is in us always, and it grows again. 'One year's seed, seven years' weed.' And behind imported Palestinian supernature, if I may be permitted to drop into Mr. Poole's style, or what I imagine to be his style, there is the home belief in fairies, spirits, and ghosts, and the reading of omens. Who amongst us does not remember the old nurse who told him stories of magic and witchcraft? Nor can it be denied that things happen that seem in contradiction to all we know of Nature's laws. Moreover, these unusual occurrences have a knack of happening to men at the moment of their setting out on some irrevocable enterprise.

"You who are so sympathetic will understand how my will has been affected by Father Moran's visit. Had you heard him tell how he was propelled, as it were, out of his house towards me, you, too, would believe that he was a messenger. He stopped on his threshold to try to find a

reason for coming to see me; he couldn't find any, and he walked on, feeling that something had happened. He must have thought himself a fool when he found me sitting here in the thick flesh. But what he said did not seem nonsense to me; it seemed like some immortal wisdom come from another world. Remember that I was on the point of going. Nor is this all. If nothing else had happened, I might have looked upon Father Moran's visit as a coincidence. But why should the wind rise? So far as I can make out, it began to rise between eleven and twelve, at the very time I should have been swimming between Castle Island and the Joycetown shore. I know that belief in signs and omens and prognostics can be laughed at; nothing is more ridiculous than the belief that man's fate is governed by the flight of birds, yet men have believed in bird augury from the beginning of the world.

"I wrote to you about a curlew (I can still see it in the air, its beautifully shapen body and wings, its long beak, and its trailing legs; it staggered a little in its flight when the shot was fired, but it had strength enough to reach Castle Island: it then toppled over, falling dead on the shore); and I ask you if it is wonderful that I should have been impressed? Such a thing was never heard of before—a wild bird with its legs tied together!

"At first I believed that this bird was sent to warn me from going, but it was that bird that put the idea into my head how I might escape from the parish without giving scandal. Life is so strange that one doesn't know what to think. Of what use are signs and omens if the interpretation is always obscure? They merely wring the will out of us; and well we may ask, Who would care for his life if he knew he was going to lose it on the morrow? And what mother would love her children if she were certain they would fall into evil ways, or if she believed the soothsayers who told her that her children

would oppose her ideas? She might love them independent of their opposition, but how could she love them if she knew they were only born to do wrong? Volumes have been written on the subject of predestination and freewill, and the truth is that it is as impossible to believe in one as in the other. Nevertheless, prognostications have a knack of coming true, and if I am drowned crossing the lake you will be convinced of the truth of omens. Perhaps I should not write you these things, but the truth is, I cannot help myself; there is no power of resistance in me. I do not know if I am well or ill; my brain is on fire, and I go on thinking and thinking, trying to arrive at some rational belief, but never succeeding. Sometimes I think of myself as a fly on a window-pane, crawling and buzzing, and crawling and buzzing again, and so on and so on. . . .

"You are one of those who seem to have been born without much interest in religion or fear of the hereafter, and in a way I am like you, but with a difference: I acquiesced in early childhood, and accepted traditional beliefs, and tried to find happiness in the familiar rather than in the unknown. Whether I should have found the familiar enough if I hadn't met you, I shall never know. I've thought a good deal on this subject, and it has come to seem to me that we are too much in the habit of thinking of the intellect and the flesh as separate things, whereas they are but one thing. I could write a great deal on this subject, but I stop, as it were, on the threshold of my thought, for this is no time for philosophical writing. I am all a-tremble, and though my brain is working quickly, my thoughts are not mature and deliberate. My brain reminds me at times of the skies that followed Father Moran's visit—skies restlessly flowing, always different and always the same. These last days are merciless days, and I have to write to you in order to get some respite from purposeless thinking. Sometimes

I stop in my walk to ask myself who I am and what I am, and where I am going. Will you be shocked to hear that, when I awoke and heard the wind howling, I nearly got out of bed to pray to God, to thank him for having sent Moran to warn me from crossing the lake? I think I did say a prayer, thanking him for his mercy. Then I felt that I should pray to him for grace that I might remain at home and be a good priest always, but that prayer I couldn't formulate, and I suffered a great deal. I know that such vacillations between belief and unbelief are neither profitable nor admirable; I know that to pray to God to thank him for having saved me from death while in mortal sin, and yet to find myself unable to pray to him to do his will, is illogical, and I confess that my fear is now lest old beliefs will claim me before the time comes. A poor, weak, tried mortal man am I, but being what I am, I cannot be different. I am calm enough now, and it seems as if my sufferings were at an end; but to-morrow some new fear will rise up like mist, and I shall be enveloped. What an awful thing it would be if I should find myself without will on the fifteenth, or the sixteenth, or the seventeenth of August! If the wind should rise again, and the lake be windy while the moon is full, my chance for leaving here this summer will be at an end. The water will be too cold in September.

"And now you know all, and if you don't get a letter from New York, understand that what appears in the newspapers is true—that I was drowned whilst bathing. I needn't apologize for this long letter; you will understand that the writing of it has taken me out of myself, and that is a great gain. There is no one else to whom I can write, and it pleases me to know this. I am sorry for my sisters in the convent; they will believe me dead. I have a brother in America, the one who sent the harmonium that you used to play on so beautifully. He will believe in my death, unless we meet in America, and that

is not likely. I look forward to writing to you from New York.

"Oliver Gogarty."

Two evenings were passed pleasantly on the composition and the copying of this letter, and, not daring to entrust it to the postboy, he took it himself to Bohola; and he measured the time carefully, so as to get there a few minutes before the postmistress sealed up the bag. He delayed in the office till she sealed it, and returned home, following the letter in imagination to Dublin, across the Channel to Beechwood Hall. The servant in charge would redirect it. His thoughts were at ramble, and they followed the steamer down the Mediterranean. It would lie in the post-office at Jerusalem or some frontier town, or maybe a dragoman attached to some Turkish caravansary would take charge of it, and it might reach Nora by caravan. She might read it in the waste. Or maybe it would have been better if he had written "Not to be forwarded" on the envelope. But the servant at Beechwood Hall would know what to do, and he returned home smiling, unable to believe in himself or in anything else, so extraordinary did it seem to him that he should be writing to Nora Glynn, who was going in search of the Christian river, while he was planning a journey westward.

A few days more, and the day of departure was almost at hand; but it seemed a very long time coming. What he needed was a material occupation, and he spent hours in his garden watering and weeding, and at gaze in front of a bed of fiery-cross. Was its scarlet not finer than Lady Hindlip? Lady Hindlip, like fiery-cross, is scentless, and not so hardy. No white carnation compares with Shiela; but her calyx often bursts, and he considered the claims of an old pink-flaked clove carnation, striped like

a French brocade. But it straggled a little in growth, and he decided that for hardiness he must give the verdict to Raby Castle. True that everyone grows Raby Castle, but no carnation is so hardy or flowers so freely. As he stood admiring her great trusses of bloom among the tea-roses, he remembered suddenly that it was his love of flowers that had brought him to Garranard, and if he hadn't come to this parish, he wouldn't have known her. And if he hadn't known her, he wouldn't have been himself. And which self did he think the worthier, his present or his dead self?

His brain would not cease thinking; his bodily life seemed to have dissipated, and he seemed to himself to be no more than a mind, and, glad to interest himself in the business of the parish, he listened with greater attention than he had ever listened before to the complaints that were brought to him—to the man who had failed to give up a piece of land that he had promised to include in his daughter's fortune, and to Patsy Murphy, who had come to tell him that his house had been broken into while he was away in Tinnick. The old man had spent the winter in Tinnick with some relations, for the house that the Colonel had given him permission to build at the edge of the lake proved too cold for a winter residence.

Patsy seemed to have grown older since the autumn; he seemed like a doll out of which the sawdust was running, a poor shaking thing—a large head afloat on a weak neck. Tresses of white hair hung on his shoulders, and his watery eyes were red and restless like a ferret's. He opened his mouth, and there were two teeth on either side like tusks. Grey stubble covered his face, and he wore a brown suit, the trousers retained about his pot-belly—all that remained of his body—by a scarf. There was some limp linen and a red muffler about his throat. He spoke of his age—he was ninety-five—and the priest said he was a fine-looking, hearty man for his years.

There wasn't a doubt but he'd pass the hundred. Patsy was inclined to believe he would go to one hundred and one; for he had been told in a vision he would go as far as that.

"You see, living in the house alone, the brain empties and the vision comes."

That was how he explained his belief as he flopped along by the priest's side, his head shaking and his tongue going, telling tales of all kinds, half-remembered things: how the Gormleys and the Actons had driven the Colonel out of the country, and dispersed all his family with their goings-on. That was why they didn't want him—he knew too much about them. One of his tales was how they had frightened the Colonel's mother by tying a lame hare by a horsehair to the knocker of the hall door. Whenever the hare moved a rapping was heard at the front-door. But nobody could discover the horsehair, and the rapping was attributed to a family ghost.

He seemed to have forgotten his sword, and was now inclined to talk of his fists, and he stopped the priest in the middle of the road to tell a long tale how once, in Liverpool, someone had spoken against the Colonel, and, holding up his clenched fist, he said that no one ever escaped alive from the fist of Patsy Murphy.

It was a trial to Father Oliver to hear him, for he could not help thinking that to become like him it was only necessary to live as long as he. But it was difficult to get rid of the old fellow, who followed the priest as far as the village, and would have followed him further if Mrs. Egan were not standing there waiting for Father Oliver—a delicate-featured woman with a thin aquiline nose, who was still good-looking, though her age was apparent. She was forty-five, or perhaps fifty, and she held her daughter's baby in her coarse peasant hands. Since the birth of the child a dispute had been raging

between the two mothers-in-law: the whole village was talking, and wondering what was going to happen next.

Mrs. Egan's daughter had married a soldier, a Protestant, some two years ago, a man called Rean. Father Oliver always found him a straightforward fellow, who, although he would not give up his own religion, never tried to interfere with his wife's; he always said that if Mary liked she could bring up her children Catholics. But hitherto they were not blessed with children, and Mary was jeered at more than once, the people saying that her barrenness was a punishment sent by God. At last a child was given them, and all would have gone well if Rean's mother had not come to Garranard for her daughter-in-law's confinement. Being a black Protestant, she wouldn't hear of the child being brought up a Catholic or even baptized in a Catholic Church. The child was now a week old and Rean was fairly distracted, for neither his own mother nor his mother-in-law would give way; each was trying to outdo the other. Mrs. Rean watched Mrs. Egan, and Mrs. Egan watched Mrs. Rean, and the poor mother lay all day with the baby at her breast, listening to the two of them quarrelling.

"She's gone behind the hedge for a minute, your reverence, so I whipped the child out of me daughter's bed; and if your reverence would only hurry up we could have the poor cratur baptized in the Holy Faith. Only there's no time to be lost; she do be watchin' every stir, your reverence."

"Very well, Mrs. Egan: I'll be waiting for you up at the chapel."

"A strange rusticity of mind," he said to himself as he wended his way along the village street, and at the chapel gate a smile gathered about his lips, for he couldn't help thinking how Mrs. Rean the elder would rage when the child was brought back to her a Catholic. So this was going to be his last priestly act, the baptism of the child,

the saving of the child to the Holy Faith. He told Mike to get the things ready, and turned into the sacristy to put on his surplice.

The familiar presses gave out a pleasant odour, and the vestments which he might never wear again interested him, and he stood seemingly lost in thought. "But I mustn't keep the child waiting," he said, waking up suddenly; and coming out of the sacristy, he found twenty villagers collected round the font, come up from the cottages to see the child baptized in the holy religion.

"Where's the child, Mrs. Egan?"

The group began talking suddenly, trying to make plain to him what had happened.

"Now, if you all talk together, I shall never understand."

"Will you leave off pushing me?" said one.

"Wasn't it I that saw Patsy? Will your reverence listen to me?" said Mrs. Egan. "It was just as I was telling your reverence, if they'd be letting me alone. Your reverence had only just turned in the chapel gate when Mrs. Rean ran from behind the hedge, and, getting in front of me who was going to the chapel with the baby in me arms, she said: 'Now I'll be damned if I'll have that child christened a Catholic!' and didn't she snatch the child and run away, taking a short-cut across the fields to the minister's."

"Patsy Kivel has gone after her, and he'll catch up on her, surely, and she with six ditches forninst her."

"If he doesn't itself, maybe the minister isn't there, and then she'll be bet."

"All I'm hopin' is that the poor child won't come to any harm between them; but isn't she a fearful terrible woman, and may the curse of the Son of God be on her for stealin' away a poor child the like of that!"

"I'd cut the livers out of the likes of them."

"Now will you mind what you're sayin', and the priest listenin' to you?"

"Your reverence, will the child be always a Protestant? Hasn't the holy water of the Church more power in it than the water they have? Don't they only throw it at the child?"

"Now, Mrs. Egan——"

"Ah, your reverence, you're going to say that I shouldn't have given the child to her, and I wouldn't if I hadn't trod on a stone and fallen against the wall, and got afeard the child might be hurt."

"Well, well," said Father Oliver, "you see there's no child——"

"But you'll be waitin' a minute for the sake of the poor child, your reverence? Patsy will be comin' back in a minute."

On that Mrs. Egan went to the chapel door and stood there, so that she might catch the first glimpse of him as he came across the fields. And it was about ten minutes after, when the priest and his parishioners were talking of other things, that Mrs. Egan began to wave her arm, crying out that somebody should hurry.

"Will you make haste, and his reverence waitin' here this half-hour to baptize the innocent child! He'll be here in less than a minute now, your reverence. Will you have patience, and the poor child will be safe?"

The child was snatched from Patsy, and so violently that the infant began to cry, and Mrs. Egan didn't know if it was a hurt it had received, for the panting Patsy was unable to answer her.

"The child's all right," he blurted out at last. "She said I might take it and welcome, now it was a Protestant."

"Ah, sure, you great thickhead of a boy! weren't you quick enough for her?"

"Now, what are you talkin' about? Hadn't she half

a mile start of me, and the minister at the door just as I was gettin' over the last bit of a wall!"

"And didn't you go in after them?"

"What would I be doin', going into a Protestant church?"

Patsy's sense of his responsibility was discussed violently until Father Oliver said:

"Now, I can't be waiting any longer. Do you want me to baptize the child or not?"

"It would be safer, wouldn't it?" said Mrs. Egan.

"It would," said Father Oliver; "the parson mightn't have said the words while he was pouring the water."

And, going towards the font with the child, Father Oliver took a cup of water, but, having regard for the child's cries, he was a little sparing of it.

"Now don't be sparin' with the water, your reverence, and don't be a mindin' its noise; it's twicest the quantity of holy water it'll be wanting, and it half an hour a Protestant."

It was at that moment Mrs. Rean appeared in the doorway, and Patsy Kivel, who didn't care to enter the Protestant church, rushed to put her out of his.

"You can do what you like now with the child; it's a Protestant, for all your tricks."

"Go along, you old heretic bitch!"

"Now, Patsy, will you behave yourself when you're standing in the Church of God! Be leaving the woman alone," said Father Oliver; but before he got to the door to separate the two, Mrs. Rean was running down the chapel yard followed by the crowd of disputants, and he heard the quarrel growing fainter in the village street.

Rose-coloured clouds had just begun to appear midway in the pale sky—a beautiful sky, all grey and rose—and all this babble about baptism seemed strangely out of his mind. "And to think that men are still seeking scrolls in Turkestan to prove——" The sentence did not

finish itself in his mind; a ray of western light falling across the altar steps in the stillness of the church awakened a remembrance in him of the music that Nora's hands drew from the harmonium, and, leaning against the Communion-rails, he allowed the music to absorb him. He could hear it so distinctly in his mind that he refrained from going up into the gallery and playing it, for in his playing he would perceive how much he had forgotten, how imperfect was his memory. It were better to lose himself in the emotion of the memory of the music; it was in his blood, and he could see her hands playing it, and the music was coloured with the memory of her hair and her eyes. His teeth clenched a little as if in pain, and then he feared the enchantment would soon pass away; but the music preserved it longer than he had expected, and it might have lasted still longer if he had not become aware that someone was standing in the doorway.

The feeling suddenly came over him that he was not alone; it was borne in upon him—he knew not how, neither by sight nor sound—through some exceptional sense. And turning towards the sunlit doorway, he saw a poor man standing there, not daring to disturb the priest, thinking, no doubt, that he was engaged in prayer. The poor man was Pat Kearney. So the priest was a little overcome, for that Pat Kearney should come to him at such a time was portentous. "It is strange, certainly, coincidence after coincidence," he said; and he stood looking at Pat as if he didn't know him, till the poor man was frightened and began to wonder, for no one had ever looked at him with such interest, not even the neighbour whom he had asked to marry him three weeks ago. And this Pat Kearney, who was a short, thick-set man, sinking into years, began to wonder what new misfortune had tracked him down. His teeth were worn and yellow as Indian meal, and his rough, ill-shaven cheeks and pale

eyes reminded the priest of the country in which Pat lived, and of the four acres of land at the end of the boreen that Pat was digging these many years.

He had come to ask Father Oliver if he would marry him for a pound, but, as Father Oliver didn't answer him, he fell to thinking that it was his clothes that the priest was admiring, "for hadn't his reverence given him the clothes himself? And if it weren't for the self-same clothes, he wouldn't have the pound in his pocket to give the priest to marry him."

"It was yourself, your reverence——"

"Yes, I remember very well."

Pat had come to tell him that there was work to be had in Tinnick, but that he didn't dare to show himself in Tinnick for lack of clothes, and he stood humbly before the priest in a pair of corduroy trousers that hardly covered his nakedness.

And it was as Father Oliver stood examining and pitying his parishioner's poverty it had occurred to him that, if he were to buy two suits of clothes in Tinnick and give one to Pat Kearney, he might wrap the other one in a bundle, and place it on the rocks on the Joycetown side. It was not likely that the shopman in Tinnick would remember, after three months, that he had sold two suits to the priest; but should he remember this, the explanation would be that he had bought them for Pat Kearney. Now, looking at this poor man who had come to ask him if he would marry him for a pound, the priest was lost in wonder.

"So you're going to be married, Pat?"

And Pat, who hadn't spoken to anyone since the woman whose potatoes he was digging said she'd as soon marry him as another, began to chatter, and to ramble in his chatter. There was so much to tell that he did not know how to tell it. There was his rent and the woman's holding, for now they would have nine acres of land, money

would be required to stock it, and he didn't know if the bank would lend him the money. Perhaps the priest would help him to get it.

"But why did you come to me to marry you? Aren't you two miles nearer to Father Moran than you are to me?"

Pat hesitated, not liking to say that he would be hard set to get round Father Moran. So he began to talk of the Egans and the Reans. For hadn't he heard, as he came up the street, that Mrs. Rean had stolen the child from Mrs. Egan, and had had it baptized by the minister? And he hoped to obtain the priest's sympathy by saying:

"What a terrible thing it was that the police should allow a black Protestant to steal a Catholic child, and its mother a Catholic and all her people before her!"

"When Mrs. Rean snatched the child, it hadn't been baptized, and was neither a Catholic nor a Protestant," the priest said maliciously.

Pat Kearney, whose theological knowledge did not extend very far, remained silent, and the priest was glad of his silence, for he was thinking that in a few minutes he would catch sight of the square white-washed school-house on the hillside by the pine-wood, and the thought came into his mind that he would like to see again the place where he and Nora once stood talking together. But a long field lay between his house and the school-house, and what would it avail him to see the empty room? He looked, instead, for the hawthorn-bush by which he and Nora had lingered, and it was a sad pleasure to think how she had gone up the road after bidding him good-bye.

But Pat Kearney began to talk again of how he could get an advance from the bank.

"I can back no bill for you, Pat, but I'll give you a letter to Father Moran telling him that you can't afford to pay more than a pound."

Nora's letters were in the drawer of his writing-table;

he unlocked it, and put the packet into his pocket, and when he had scribbled a little note to Father Moran, he said:

"Now take this and be off with you; I've other business to attend to besides you;" and he called to Catherine for his towels.

"Now, is it out bathing you're going, your reverence? You won't be swimming out to Castle Island, and forgetting that you have confessions at seven?"

"I shall be back in time," he answered testily, and soon after he began to regret his irritation; for he would never see Catherine again, saying to himself that it was a pity he had answered her testily. But he couldn't go back. Moran might call. Catherine might send Moran after him, saying his reverence had gone down to bathe, or any parishioner, however unwarranted his errand, might try to see him out. "And all errands will be unwarranted to-day," he said as he hurried along the shore, thinking of the different paths round the rocks and through the blackthorn-bushes.

His mind was on the big wood; there he could baffle anybody following him, for while his pursuer would be going round one way he would be coming back the other. But it would be lonely in the big wood; and as he hurried down the old cart-track he thought how he might while away an hour among the ferns in the little spare fields at the end of the plantation, watching the sunset, for hours would have to pass before the moon rose, and the time would pass slowly under the melancholy hazel-thickets into which the sun had not looked for thousands of years. A wood had always been there. The Welshmen had felled trees in it to build rafts and boats to reach their island castles. Bears and wolves had been slain in it; and thinking how it was still a refuge for foxes, martens and badgers and hawks, he made his way along the shore through the rough fields. He ran a little, and after

waiting a while ran on again. On reaching the edge of the wood, he hid himself behind a bush, and did not dare to move, lest there might be somebody about. It was not till he made sure there was no one that he stooped under the blackthorns, and followed a trail, thinking the animal, probably a badger, had its den under the old stones; and to pass the time he sought for a den, but could find none.

A small bird, a wren, was picking among the moss; every now and then it fluttered a little way, stopped, and picked again. "Now what instinct guided its search for worms?" he asked, and getting up, he followed the bird, but it escaped into a thicket. There were only hazel-stems in the interspace he had chosen to hide himself in, but there were thickets nearly all about it, and it took some time to find a path through these. After a time one was found, and by noticing everything he tried to pass the time away and make himself secure against being surprised.

The path soon came to an end, and he walked round to the other side of the wood, to see if the bushes were thick enough to prevent anyone from coming upon him suddenly from that side; and when all searches were finished he came back, thinking of what his future life would be without Nora. But he must not think of her, he must learn to forget her; for the time being at least, his consideration must be of himself in his present circumstances, and he felt that if he did not fix his thoughts on external things, his courage—or should he say his will?—would desert him. It did not need much courage to swim across the lake, much more to leave the parish, and once on the other side he must go any whither, no whither, for he couldn't return to Catherine in a frieze coat and a pair of corduroy trousers. Her face when she saw him! But of what use thinking of these things? He was going; everything was settled. If he could only restrain his thoughts—they were as wild as bees.

Standing by a hazel-stem, his hand upon a bough, he fell to thinking what his life would be, and very soon becoming implicated in a dream, he lost consciousness of time and place, and was borne away as by a current; he floated down his future life, seeing his garret room more clearly than he had ever seen it—his bed, his washhand-stand, and the little table on which he did his writing. No doubt most of it would be done in the office, but some of it would be done at home; and at nightfall he would descend from his garret like a bat from the eaves.

Journalists flutter like bats about newspaper offices. The bats haunt the same eaves, but the journalist drifts from city to city, from county to county, busying himself with ideas that were not his yesterday, and will not be his to-morrow. An interview with a statesman is followed by a review of a book, and the day after he may be thousands of miles away, describing a great flood or a railway accident. The journalist has no time to make friends, and he lives in no place long enough to know it intimately; passing acquaintance and exterior aspects of things are his share of the world. And it was in quest of such vagrancy of ideas and affections that he was going.

At that moment a sudden sound in the wood startled him from his reverie, and he peered, a scared expression on his face, certain that the noise he had heard was Father Moran's footstep. It was but a hare lolloping through the underwood, and wondering at the disappointment he felt, he asked if he were disappointed that Moran had not come again to stop him. He didn't think he was, only the course of his life had been so long dependent on a single act of will that a hope had begun in his mind that some outward event might decide his fate for him. Last month he was full of courage, his nerves were like iron; to-day he was a poor vacillating creature, walking in a hazel-wood, uncertain lest delay had taken the savour out of his adventure, his attention distracted by the

sounds of the wood, by the snapping of a dry twig, by a leaf falling through the branches.

"Time is passing," he said, "and I must decide whether I go to America to write newspaper articles, or stay at home to say Mass—a simple matter, surely."

The ordinary newspaper article he thought he could do as well as another—in fact, he knew he could. But could he hope that in time his mind would widen and deepen sufficiently to enable him to write something worth writing, something that might win her admiration? Perhaps, when he had shed all his opinions. Many had gone already, more would follow, and one day he would be as free as she was. She had been a great intellectual stimulus, and soon he began to wonder how it was that all the paraphernalia of religion interested him no longer, how he seemed to have suddenly outgrown the things belonging to the ages of faith, and the subtle question, if passion were essential to the growth of the mind, arose. For it seemed to him that his mind had grown, though he had not read the Scriptures, and he doubted if the reading of the Scriptures would have taught him as much as Nora's beauty. "After all," he said, "woman's beauty is more important to the world than a scroll." He had begun to love and to put his trust in what was natural, spontaneous, instinctive, and might succeed in New York better than he expected. But he would not like to think that it was hope of literary success that tempted him from Garranard. He would like to think that in leaving his poor people he was serving their best interests, and this was surely the case. For hadn't he begun to feel that what they needed was a really efficient priest, one who would look after their temporal interests? In Ireland the priest is a temporal as well as a spiritual need. Who else would take an interest in this forlorn Garranard and its people, the reeds and rushes of existence?

He had striven to get the Government to build a bridge,

but had lost patience; he had wearied of the task. Certain priests he knew would not have wearied of it; they would have gone on heckling the Government and the different Boards until the building of the bridge could no longer be resisted. His failure to get this bridge was typical, and it proved beyond doubt that he was right in thinking he had no aptitude for the temporal direction of his parish.

But a curate had once lived in Bridget Clery's cottage who had served his people excellently well, had intrigued successfully, and forced the Government to build houses and advance money for drainage and other useful works. And this curate had served his people in many capacities—as scrivener, land-valuer, surveyor, and engineer. It was not till he came to Garranard that he seemed to get out of touch with practical affairs, and he began to wonder if it was the comfortable house he lived in, if it were the wine he drank, the cigars he smoked, that had produced this degeneracy, if it were degeneracy. Or was it that he had worn out a certain side of his nature in Bridget Clery's cottage? It might well be that. Many a man has mistaken a passing tendency for a vocation. We all write poetry in the beginning of our lives; but most of us leave off writing poetry after some years, unless the instinct is very deep or one is a fool. It might well be that his philanthropic instincts were exhausted; and it might well be that this was not the case, for one never gets at the root of one's nature.

The only thing he was sure of was that he had changed a great deal, and, he thought, for the better. He seemed to himself a much more real person than he was a year ago, being now in full possession of his soul, and surely the possession of one's soul is a great reality. By the soul he meant a special way of feeling and seeing. But the soul is more than that—it is a light; and this inner light, faint at first, had not been blown out. If he had

blown it out, as many priests had done, he would not have experienced any qualms of conscience. The other priests in the diocese experienced none when they drove erring women out of their parishes, and the reason of this was that they followed a light from without, deliberately shutting out the light of the soul.

The question interested him, and he pondered it a long while, finding himself at last forced to conclude that there is no moral law except one's own conscience, and that the moral obligation of every man is to separate the personal conscience from the impersonal conscience. By the impersonal conscience he meant the opinions of others, traditional beliefs, and the rest; and thinking of these things he wandered round the Druid stones, and when his thoughts returned to Nora's special case he seemed to understand that if any other priest had acted as he had acted he would have acted rightly, for in driving a sinful woman out of the parish he would be giving expression to the moral law as he understood it and as Garranard understood it. This primitive code of morals was all Garranard could understand in its present civilization, and any code is better than no code. Of course, if the priest were a transgressor himself he could not administer the law. Happily, that was a circumstance that did not arise often. So it was said; but what did he know of the souls of the priests with whom he dined, smoked pipes, and played cards? And he stopped, surprised, for it had never occurred to him that all a man knows of his fellow is whether he be clean or dirty, short or tall, thin or stout. "Even the soul of Moran is obscure to me," he said—"obscure as this wood;" and at that moment the mystery of the wood seemed to deepen, and he stood for a long while looking through the twilight of the hazels.

Very likely many of the priests he knew had been tempted by women: some had resisted temptation, and some had sinned and repented. There might be a priest

who had sinned and lived for years in sin; even so if he didn't leave his parish, if he didn't become an apostate priest, faith would return to him in the end. But the apostate priest is anathema in the eyes of the Church; the doctrine always has been that a sin matters little if the sinner repent. Father Oliver suddenly saw himself years hence, still in Garranard, administering the Sacraments, and faith returning like an incoming tide, covering the weedy shore, lapping round the high rock of doubt. If he desired faith, all he had to do was to go on saying Mass, hearing confessions, baptizing the young, burying the old, and in twenty years—maybe it would take thirty—when his hair was white and his skin shrivelled, he would be again a good priest, beloved by his parishioners, and carried in the fulness of time by them to the green churchyard where Father Peter lay near the green pines.

Only the other day, coming home from his afternoon's walk, he stopped to admire his house. The long shadow of its familiar trees awakened an extraordinary love in him, and when he crossed the threshold and sat down in his armchair, his love for his house had surprised him, and he sat like one enchanted by his own fireside, lost in admiration of the old mahogany bookcase with the inlaid panels, that he had bought at an auction. How sombre and quaint it looked, furnished with his books that he had had bound in Dublin, and what pleasure it always was to him to see a ray lighting up the parchment bindings! He had hung some engravings on his walls, and these had become very dear to him; and there were some spoons, bought at an auction some time ago—old, worn Georgian spoons—that his hands were accustomed to the use of; there was an old tea-service, with flowers painted inside the cups, and he was leaving these things; why? He sought for a reason for his leaving them. If he were going away to join Nora in America he could understand his going. But he would never see her again—at least,

it was not probable that he would. He was not following her, but an idea, an abstraction, an opinion; he was separating himself, and for ever, from his native land and his past life, and his quest was, alas! not her, but—— He was following what? Life? Yes; but what is life? Do we find life in adventure or by our own fireside? For all he knew he might be flying from the very thing he thought he was following. His thoughts zigzagged, and, almost unaware of his thoughts, he compared life to a flower—to a flower that yields up its perfume only after long cultivation—and then to a wine that gains its fragrance only after it has been lying in the same cellar for many years, and he started up convinced that he must return home at once. But he had not taken many steps before he stopped:

"No, no, I cannot stay here year after year! I cannot stay here till I die, seeing that lake always. I couldn't bear it. I am going. It matters little to me whether life is to be found at home or abroad, in adventure or in habits and customs. One thing matters—do I stay or go?"

He turned into the woods and walked aimlessly, trying to escape from his thoughts, and to do so he admired the pattern of the leaves, the flight of the birds, and he stopped by the old stones that may have been Druid altars; and he came back an hour after, walking slowly through the hazel-stems, thinking that the law of change is the law of life. At that moment the cormorants were coming down the glittering lake to their roost. With a flutter of wings they perched on the old castle, and his mind continued to formulate arguments, and the last always seemed the best.

At half-past seven he was thinking that life is gained by escaping from the past rather than by trying to retain it; he had begun to feel more and more sure that tradition is but dead flesh which we must cut off if we would live. . . . But just at this spot, an hour ago, he had

acquiesced in the belief that if a priest continued to administer the Sacraments faith would return to him; and no doubt the Sacraments would bring about some sort of religious stupor, but not that sensible, passionate faith which he had once possessed, and which did not meet with the approval of his superiors at Maynooth. He had said that in flying from the monotony of tradition he would find only another monotony, and a worse one—that of adventure; and no doubt the journalist's life is made up of fugitive interests. But every man has, or should have, an intimate life as well as an external life; and in losing interest in religion he had lost the intimate life which the priesthood had once given him. The Mass was a mere Latin formula, and the vestments and the chalice, the Host itself, a sort of fetishism—that is to say, a symbolism from which life had departed, shells retaining hardly a murmur of the ancient ecstasy. It was therefore his fate to go in quest of—what? Not of adventure. He liked better to think that his quest was the personal life—that intimate exaltation that comes to him who has striven to be himself, and nothing but himself. The life he was going to might lead him even to a new faith. Religious forms arise and die. The Catholic Church had come to the end of its thread; the spool seemed pretty well empty, and he sat down so that he might think better what the new faith might be. What would be its first principle? he asked himself, and not finding any answer to this question, he began to think of his life in America. He would begin as a mere recorder of passing events. But why should he assume that he would not rise higher? And if he remained to the end of his day a humble reporter, he would still have the supreme satisfaction of knowing that he had not resigned himself body and soul to the life of the pool, to a frog-like acquiescence in the stagnant pool.

His hand held back a hazel-branch, and he stood staring at the lake. The wild ducks rose in great flocks out of the reeds and went away to feed in the fields, and their departure was followed by a long interval, during which no single thought crossed his mind—at least, none that he could remember. No doubt his tired mind had fallen into lethargy, from which a sudden fear had roughly awakened him. What if some countryman, seeking his goats among the rocks, had come upon the bundle and taken it home! And at once he imagined himself climbing up the rocks naked. Pat Kearney's cabin was close by, but Pat had no clothes except those on his back, and would have to go round the lake to Garranard; and the priest thought how he would sit naked in Kearney's cottage hour after hour.

"If anyone comes to the cabin I shall have to hold the door to. There is a comic side to every adventure," he said, "and a more absurd one it would be difficult to imagine."

The day had begun in a ridiculous adventure—the baptism of the poor child, baptized first a Protestant, then a Catholic. And he laughed a little, and then he sighed.

"Is the whole thing a fairy-tale, a piece of midsummer madness, I wonder? No matter, I can't stay here, so why should I trouble to discover a reason for my going? In America I shall be living a life in agreement with God's instincts. My quest is life."

And, remembering some words in her last letter, his heart cried out that his love must bring her back to him eventually, though Poole were to take her to the end of the earth, and at once he was carried quickly beyond the light of common sense into a dim, happy world where all things came and went or were transformed in obedience to his unexpressed will. Whether the sun were curtained by leafage or by silken folds he did not know—only this: that she was coming towards him, borne lightly as a ball

of thistledown. He perceived the colour of her hair, and eyes, and hands, and of the pale dress she wore; but her presence seemed revealed to him through the exaltation of some sense latent or non-existent in him in his waking moods. His delight was of the understanding, for they neither touched hands nor spoke. A little surprise rose to the surface of his rapture—surprise at the fact that he experienced no pang of jealousy. She had said that true love could not exist without jealousy! But was she right in this? It seemed to him that we begin to love when we cease to judge. If she were different she wouldn't be herself, and it was herself he loved—the mystery of her sunny, singing nature. There is no judgment where there is perfect sympathy, and he understood that it would be as vain for him to lament that her eyebrows were fair as to lament or reprove her conduct.

Continuing the same train of thought, he remembered that, though she was young to-day, she would pass into middle, maybe old age; that the day would come when her hair would be less bright, her figure would lose its willowness; but these changes would not lessen his love for her. Should he not welcome change? Thinking that perhaps fruit-time is better than blossom-time, he foresaw a deeper love awaiting him, and a tenderness that he could not feel to-day might be his in years to come. Nor could habit blunt his perceptions or intimacy unravel the mystery of her sunny nature. So the bourne could never be reached; for when everything had been said, something would remain unspoken. The two rhythms out of which the music of life is made, intimacy and adventure, would meet, would merge, and become one; and she, who was to-day an adventure, would become in the end the home of his affections.

A great bird swopped out of the branches above him, startling him, and he cried out: "An owl—only an owl!" The wood was quiet and dark, and in fear he groped his

way to the old stones; for one thing still remained to be done before he left—he must burn her letters.

He burnt them one by one, shielding the flame with his hand lest it should attract some passer-by, and when the last was burnt he feared no longer anything. His wonder was why he had hesitated, why his mind had been torn by doubt. At the back of his mind he had always known he was going. Had he not written saying he was going, and wasn't that enough? And he thought for a moment of what her opinion of him would be if he stayed in Garranard. In a cowardly moment he hoped that something would happen to save him from the ultimate decision, and now doubt was overcome.

A yellow disc appeared, cutting the flat sky sharply, and he laid his priest's clothes in the middle of a patch of white sand where they could be easily seen. Placing the Roman collar upon the top, and, stepping from stone to stone, he stood on the last one as on a pedestal, tall and grey in the moonlight—buttocks hard as a faun's, and dimpled like a faun's when he draws himself up before plunging after a nymph.

When he emerged he was among the reeds, shaking the water from his face and hair. The night was so warm that it was like swimming in a bath, and when he had swum a quarter of a mile he turned over on his back to see the moon shining. Then he turned over to see how near he was to the island. "Too near," he thought, for he had started before his time. But he might delay a little on the island, and he walked up the shore, his blood in happy circulation, his flesh and brain a-tingle, a little captivated by the vigour of his muscles, and ready and anxious to plunge into the water on the other side, to tire himself if he could, in the mile and a half of grey lake that lay between him and shore.

There were lights in every cottage window; the villagers would be about the roads for an hour or more, and

it would be well to delay on the island, and he chose a high rock to sit upon. His hand ran the water off his hard thighs, and then off his long, thin arms, and he watched the laggard moon rising slowly in the dusky night, like a duck from the marshes. Supporting himself with one arm, he let himself down the rock and dabbled his foot in the water, and the splashing of the water reminded him of little Philip Rean, who had been baptized twice that morning notwithstanding his loud protest. And now one of his baptizers was baptized, and in a few minutes would plunge again into the beneficent flood.

The night was so still and warm that it was happiness to be naked, and he thought he could sit for hours on that rock without feeling cold, watching the red moon rolling up through the trees round Tinnick; and when the moon turned from red to gold he wondered how it was that the mere brightening of the moon could put such joy into a man's heart.

Derrinrush was the nearest shore, and far away in the wood he heard a fox bark. "On the trail of some rabbit," he thought, and again he admired the great gold moon rising heavily through the dusky sky, and the lake formless and spectral beneath it.

Catherine no doubt had begun to feel agitated; she would be walking about at midnight, too scared to go to sleep. He was sorry for her; perhaps she would be the only one who would prefer to hear he was in America and doing well than at the bottom of the lake. Eliza would regret in a way, as much as her administration of the convent would allow her; Mary would pray for him—so would Eliza, for the matter of that; and their prayers would come easily, thinking him dead. Poor women! if only for their peace of mind he would undertake the second half of the crossing.

A long mile of water lay between him and Joycetown, but there was a courage he had never felt before in his

heart, and a strength he had never felt before in his limbs. Once he stood up in the water, sorry that the crossing was not longer. "Perhaps I shall have had enough of it before I get there;" and he turned on his side and swam half a mile before changing his stroke. He changed it and got on his back because he was beginning to feel cold and tired, and soon after he began to think that it would be about as much as he could do to reach the shore. A little later he was swimming frog-fashion, but the change did not seem to rest him, and seeing the shore still a long way off he began to think that perhaps after all he would find his end in the lake. His mind set on it, however, that the lake should be foiled, he struggled on, and when the water shallowed he felt he had come to the end of his strength. "Another hundred yards would have done for me," he said, and he was so cold that he could not think, and sought his clothes vaguely, sitting down to rest from time to time among the rocks. He didn't know for certain if he would find them, and if he didn't he must die of cold. So the rough shirt was very welcome when he discovered it, and so were the woollen socks. As soon as he was dressed he thought that he felt nearly strong enough to climb up the rocks, but he was not as strong as he thought, and it took him a long time to get to the top. But at the top the sward was pleasant—it was the sward of the terrace of the old house; and lying at length, fearful lest sleep might overtake him, he looked across the lake. "A queer dusky night," he said, "with hardly a star, and that great moon pouring silver down the lake.

"I shall never see that lake again, but I shall never forget it," and as he dozed in the train, in a corner of an empty carriage, the spectral light of the lake awoke him, and when he arrived at Cork it seemed to him that he was being engulfed in the deep pool by the Joycetown shore.

On the deck of the steamer he heard the lake's warble above the violence of the waves. "There is a lake in every man's heart," he said, "and he listens to its monotonous whisper year by year, more and more attentive till at last he ungirds."

THE END

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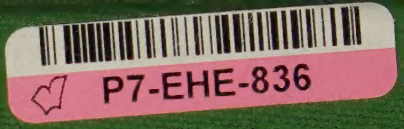
Moore, George, 1852-1933.

The collected works of
George Moore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